

'Peeps into the Past' article in the *Ramsey Courier* 1959

by Syd Boulton

*Variety Shows in Ramsey Court House*

March 6<sup>th</sup> 1959:

## **Variety Shows in Ramsey Court House. Performances 250 Years Ago**

### **"The Theatre Royal"**

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HOW many people know that the precincts of the Ramsey Court House at one time housed variety performances and plays and that it was called "The Theatre Royal" and charges of 4s 6d and 4s were made for "Boxes", 3s for the "Pit" and 1s for the "Gallery"?

In this weeks article, referring to a period 250 years ago when these shows were given, there are also some interesting, little known facts, about the history of drama in the Island and its early entertainments - long before the days of pierrots on the shore, "Penny Readings," "Peppers' Ghosts" and other events of which we have heard during the past century.

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One of the first performances in the Court-House – which had only been built a few years previously – was on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1809.

A handbill, printed by G. Jefferson, Ramsey, is among a few (presented by Mr E. B. C. Farrant, M.L.C., to the Manx Museum), and it is interesting to note that it is headed in big type: "Theatre Royal, Ramsey," with the words "Court House" underneath.

It was in the reign of George III, little more than four years after the Battle of Trafalgar, and mid-way in the regime of the fourth Duke of Athol [sic] as Governor of the Island, that the Court House was such a popular centre for entertainment.

The 1809 performance referred to was "Under the patronage and by particular desire of Capt. Tellet and several other gentlemen," and "For the benefit of Mr Power." It was announced that the muchadmired comedy of "The Heir at Law" would be performed and the cast consisted of Mr Moss, Mr Andrews, Mr Radford, Mr Banks, Mr Keld, Master Holiday, Master Power, Mr Newton, Mr Power, Mr York, Mrs Andrews, Mrs Holiday, Mrs Moss. (Was this Master Power by any chance the famous Irish actor, Tyrone Power, 1785-1841, son of a strolling player. Who made his mark in the theatrical world about 1826 after playing comedy in minor theatres in the provinces?).

The programme included a song by Master Power, and other sketches, and a comic song by Master Holiday and ended with a musical farce "The Waterman" or "The First of August" played by several members of the company. Seats for this performance were priced at 3s for boxes, 2s for the pit and 1s for the gallery.

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It was announced too that doors would be opened at 6 p.m. And the performance would begin at 7-30.

**"FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR"**

Another performance was said to be "For the Benefit of the Poor" in which the public were "Most respectfully informed" that "the present appointed benefit for this laudable purpose is given by Mr Moss and his performers **free of all professional expenses whatever** and it is most earnestly to be hoped that the same will be attended with universal patronage. For surely it must afford to the Liberal and the Humane a most lively and pleasing sensation to think that while laughing at the performance **within** doors, they are by their munificence and charity so good as to administer comfort and consolation to their fellow creatures **without** at the same time. The money arising from this proposed benefit will be handed over to William Kissack and Lace Gelling Esquires who have honourably promised to act as stewards on the occasion.

This performance is dated December 4<sup>th</sup>. 1809, and began with the "favourite and much admired comedy" of "The Miser" or "Love for Money".

The role of the miser was played by Mr Moss "as performed by him in the Theatres Royal, London, Dublin, Edinburgh, etc." and he introduced also the favourite comic song "Money, money is your friend."

Another attraction was the appearance of Miss Montford as "Wheedle" in the play and other players were Mrs Newton, Mr Newton, and Mr Cushion.

A Scottish song "Or all the arts the wind can Bla" was another item in the programme together with a comic song and hornpipe by Master Holiday. The concluding piece was "the truly diverting entertainment "Coopers" or "Love in a Tub."

Another performance which probably gave great enjoyment to the inhabitants of Ramsey – at that time described as a neat little town of 300 houses. Was on the final night of the company's run – December 18th when they performed the "celebrated and admired tragedy of "Jane Shore," and by contrast there was a farce "The Merry Mourners." The piece-de-resistance apparently was the farewell address by Mr Moss who gave the benefit by the "Young Gentlemen of Ramsey."

During that same winter these players had several "benefits."

We learn from another handbill that there was a performance "By desire and under the patronage of Captain Linah, of the Royal Manx Fencibles, for the benefit of Mrs Newton." The bill this time included the favourite comedy "Secrets Worth Knowing," the song "Paddy's Wedding" by Mr Newton, "The Death of Abercrombie" by Mr Cushion, and the final item a farce called "The Farmer."

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Tickets could be obtained from Mr Newton and the usual inns.

Even ten years later in 1819 there were plays staged at the "Theatre Royal" and performances under the auspices of Mr Blanchard suggest that it might have been William Blanchard, a popular English actor who belonged to a travelling company and for a few years before his death in 1835 was a well known actor, specialising in heavy comedy and in the character parts, particularly those of drunkards and old men.

A musical drama in 1819 staged in Ramsey was entitled "The Heart of Midlothian" and there was a farce "XYZ."

Another play was "School of Reform" and attention was drawn to the fact that it was "Miss O'Neill's Last Night But One" with the company – she was the heroine of the tragedy "Evadne." "Rob Roy" was another well tried play which was presented also a farce "Who's Who."

Another benefit performance was given to Miss S. Booth and by this time we note the prices had gone up to 4s 6d, 4s, 3s and 1s, with doors open at 6 p.m, for the showing starting at 7 p.m.

"The Road to Ruin" was the title of another play which was a favourite about that time and the programme also included a dancing display by Mr St. Albin and Miss Aylett.

#### **PLAYS IN 1801**

Ramsey seems to have a long tradition in regard to dramatic performances for it is recorded by Train, in his Tour of the Island about this period.

"In the early part of the present century, the inhabitants of Ramsey appear to have a peculiar taste for drama.

**During the winter of 1801 a society of ladies and gentlemen was formed there, and met three evening every week for the purpose of reading and acting Shakespeare's plays and such a number of copies was procured, that each character of the drama was supported by a separate individual."**

Robertson's Tour refers to a theatre in Douglas in 1820, a year after the Ramsey Court House performances.

But the earliest record of drama in the Island is linked up with Castle Rushen.

In the "Book of Charge" relating to the Castle there is a reference in 1603 to a "Reward" which was paid to "My Lord Vaux Players in respect of a Plaie acted by them"-(the reward was 20 shillings).

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These players were, it seems, a strolling band who went from place to place carrying costumes on their backs and their patron was Lord Vaux.

**A FAMOUS WIRE DANCER**

In 1772 it was reported that Bisset, the famous wire dancer, had performed in Castletown and a letter sent by a young student lawyer, William Callow, from Castletown to his mother at Cloughbane, Maughold, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February, refers to excitement in the Metropolis about the performance. He wrote "I have been to see the famous wire dancer exhibit who is to be at Ramsey shortly. The Governor's family, Mr Taubman's and Mr Quayle's were all there to see it."

The writer later became an active and patriotic Member of the House of Keys in their struggle with the Duke of Atholl and a marble tablet to his memory was erected in St. Mary's Chapel, Castletown.

About 16 years later than this Captain William Barton Tenison, a member of an Irish family settled in the Isle of Man, built two assembly halls, one in Fort Street and the other at the North Quay close to the Parade in Douglas and entertainments were given there.

Few records of theatrical performances are given in the early Manx newspapers but there is an advertisement of "The Road to Ruin" - a play also performed at Ramsey Court House after the turn of the century and "The Beggar's Opera."

A man named Ryley had performances in Peel in 1795 and there was the visit to the Island in 1796 of a Polish Count

**He was a dwarf, 39 ins. in height, who played the guitar and violin, and danced and was a very competent entertainer who incidentally published a book on his travels in which he made reference to the Isle of Man.**

The Duke of Rutland in his description of a visit to the Isle of Man in 1797 describes a visit to Tenison's theatre in which he witnessed a performance of "The Farmer" and "Wild Oats" performed, he stated, "by a most miserable set of actors. Sir George Thunder was intolerably drunk," whilst Miss Heywood, the prettiest beauty in the town, was said to have walked about during the show which ended at midnight.

The first Douglas Theatre, following Tennison's [sic] Hall, was opened about 1809, there was also an entertainment room at the Coffee Palace on the Quay and the Old Playhouse, and Bank's Dining Room and Playhouse near the top of the quay and sometimes called Downward's Long Room. This was a building 50 feet long by 40 feet near to where Clinch's Brewery later had their premises.

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The Theatre Royal at the Pier opened in 1822 and there was also a theatre at the corner of Prospect Hill and Athol St. One of the best known in later years was of course the Theatre Royal in Wellington Street which opened in 1858.

The Derby Castle – “the home of variety” opened in 1877, the Grand Theatre in 1882 and the Pier Pavillion (later the Royalty Cinema was built on this site) in 1905. The Palace Ballroom was opened in 1889 and was destroyed by fire in 1920 and rebuilt and the Villa Marina opened in 1923.

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*Early Days of "The Guild"*

May 1<sup>st</sup> 1959:

## Early Days of "The Guild"

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**Manx Music Festival Began in 1892**

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**67<sup>th</sup> Annual Event Next Week**  
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AN institution of which the Isle of Man is justly proud of the Manx Music Festival, or "The Guild" as it has been affectionately known for many years.

When the competitions start in the Villa Marina next Monday it will mark the 67<sup>th</sup> annual event of this kind.

It is appropriate therefore in this week's article in our series to recall how the Festival began and to relate some of its early history.

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The name of the late Miss M. L. Wood will always be revered in connection with the founding of the Manx "Guild" in the 1890's.

Mis [sic] Wood was an outstanding musician with a great love of the Island and a burning enthusiasm for Manx music and culture and several of her compositions are well remembered. She wrote carols, hymns and one or two sea shanties. Her first effort was a song "The Bells of Kirk Braddan".

Miss Wood belonged to a Yorkshire family and died in January, 1925, at the age of 85 years.

The "Guild" obtained its name from the fact that the musical section was begun as a sideline of the Fine Arts and Industrial Guild which had been going for some years prior to 1892.

The Fine Arts Guild was devoted to painting and drawing competition, knitting, woodcarving and needlework and other handicrafts with an emphasis on local products.

**An encouragement was provided for servants who gave faithful service because prizes were given to women who had been in the same situation for 25 years!**

The Guild was held in the Palace which had been built three years earlier (1889) and was a popular event though music classes had not up to then been included.

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There were only five competitions with 42 entrants in the first music classes on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1892, and to fill in the rest of the programme there was a concert as well.

The first choral classes for adult choirs attracted three choirs – Peel New Church Choir, Douglas Cantata Society and Peel Choral Society. The Douglas Cantata Society, conducted by Mr A. Proctor, won this class.

Ten juvenile choirs competed and winners were King William's College and the Girls Singing Class conducted by Miss Wood.

The adjudicator was Mr Frederick Maskell, a lecturer in music at Edge Hill Training College, Liverpool, who commented that he had never heard better part singing and recommended that the three senior choirs should merge and take part in eisteddfods in Wales and festivals in England.

It was quite an auspicious occasion this first festival and Mrs Walpole, wife of Governor Spencer Walpole presented the prizes.

In 1893 we find 11 classes in the music section of the Guild and there was considerably more interest in the competitions which took place in the Opera House. The judge was Dr. Fisher of Blackpool. Mrs Laughton, wife of High-Bailiff A. N. Laughton, of Peel, and Mrs Goldie Taubman became secretaries in place of Miss Wood.

Another new feature was the vocal quartette [sic] and there was introduced a new class for the choirs of private scholls won by the old Castletown Grammar School choir conducted by Mr J. T. W. Wicksey, headmaster.

**It is of interest that his grand-daughter, Miss Eileen Clarey, of Regaby, is now organist of Andreas Parish Church.**

And her grandmother, Mrs Wicksey, who lives with her daughter, Mrs Clarey, is the proud possessor of a silver medal won at the Guild in 1894. She was in Castletown Choral Society, conducted by Miss M. L. Wood who were marked so high that each member of the choir received a silver medal.

By 1895 the Guild had progressed so much that it was decided to hold the senior classes in March or April instead of early December, as choristers and soloists had grown in numbers and said they could not have their test pieces sufficiently well rehearsed by December.

The juniors continued to compete in December as usual but the seniors sang in April.

And ever since that time the Guild has continued to be held in April or May.

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At the 1896 event Lord Henniker, the new Governor extended his patronage to the concert and the judge was Mr R. Meyrick Roberts, organist and choir director of St. Andrew's, Penrith.

A feature of the concert was the staging of the combined choirs (286 voices).

The competitions were held in the Palace instead of the Opera House and it was reported that “the size of the room filled many of the competitors with dismay.”

A choir from Andreas, conducted by Miss Gill, was second in the village choirs class – Cronkbourne (Mr Harry Bridson) being first.

A “Courier” correspondent in his account of the competitions wrote: “Music from ten in the morning until ten at night is more than we care for or appreciate, still we must acknowledge it was good to be there.”

He also commented: “We would like to tell our lady readers what Lord Henniker's daughters wore at their really first public appearance as, of course the ball on Tuesday can scarcely be called 'public' and only a limited few could see these ladies there. We are sorry though we cannot describe the pretty frocks which it goes without saying the Misses Henniker wore. They were so entirely enveloped in enormous opera cloaks that no other portion of their dresses could be seen. All that we could see was that one lady wore a pink cloak, and the younger one pure white, and that both cloaks were fussily ornamented with feathers.”

In 1897 the first male voice choir contest was held and resulted: 1<sup>st</sup>, Castletown: 2<sup>nd</sup>, Kirk Michael: 3<sup>rd</sup>, Peel.

1897 was also the year in which a separate committee was formed to look after musical interests at the Guild and in the following year the Guild was extended to two days and by 1905 it had extended to three days.

Prominent, personalities served on the committee and supported the Guild in various ways.

Queen Alexandra when she visited the Island in 1902 with King Edward was pleased to hear of the progress made with the festival and when a programme was sent to her in the following year she replied from Buckingham Palace personally assuring Mrs A. N. Laughton, Secretary, “of the great interest I feel in the musical progress of the inhabitants of the beautiful Island I visited last autumn.”

In 1912 the festival celebrated its coming of age with a three day series of competitions. A special bronze plaque, designed to commemorate the occasion was given to all first prize winners, and a souvenir programme was filled with congratulatory messages from distinguished musicians and others.



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Mr C. F. Clucas of Cronkbourne, later Sir Frederick Clucas, Speaker of the House of Keys, quoted in his good wishes message a passage from a letter written by the Manx poet T. E. Brown, as follows: "Our Manx people are musical – they have fair voices and they sing in tune. This better quality of theirs is almost as infallible as are their 'aitches' for which let us be duly thankful!"

**The Festival increased in importance and influence and in 1920 the Thursday night Guild concert which has become one of the big musical occasions, features a cantata "England Expects," conducted by one of the judges, Dr. Campbell Stewart.**

In commemoration of their services to the Guild presentations were made to Miss M. L. Wood, A.R.C.O., Mr Leigh Goldie-Taubman, and Mr Copeland Smith, and there was a farewell reference and a presentation to Mrs A. N. Laughton in appreciation of 29 years' service to the organisation.

#### **A PROTEST**

There was a protest in the village choirs class which resulted in Onchan displacing Malew on the grounds that they had sung a test piece accompanied whereas it was stipulated it should be unaccompanied.

In these days there is a commemoration of Miss M. L. Wood's great work in that a £5 scholarship is awarded each year to the most promising boy and girl in the piano or instrumental classes.

In 1923 there was presented to the committee by the Cleveland Manx Society the gold medal which has become the prized award for solo singers each year. The first winner was Mr Allan Quirk (bass) who repeated this win in 1930 and 1932,

Mr Stanley Skinner (bass) won in 1924, Mrs Harley Cunningham (soprano) in the following year and Mrs L. M. R. Bull, mezzo-soprano, in 1926, 1929 and 1934.

In the 1930's the Guild reached new heights of success and the standard of the singing was praised on all sides.

Mrs Quinton Smith, soprano, won in 1927 and Mr Fred Minay, jnr., brought the honour to the baritones in 1928, the honour returned to the sopranos in 1931 with a win by Mrs J. Cowley. Miss Mona Clucas, soprano, won the medal in 1933, Mr Joe Corrin (bass) in 1935 and another bass, Mr Edward Killen in 1937. In 1936 and 1938 the tenor, Mr H. Comish, was successful and the in 1939 Mr Bob Nicholl tenor, was winner and eight years later he won again.

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Mr Dan Minay was a popular baritone winner in 1940 and 1946, Mr A. W. Quirk (bass) carried off the honours in 1948 and 1952 and Mr Lewis Gale, baritone in 1949.

In recent years the winners have included Miss Eileen Peter, soprano (1950); Mrs Ena Gelling, mezzo-soprano, in 1951 and 1958; Mrs G. Skillicorn, mezzo-soprano (1953); Mr A. Connan, tenor (1954); Mr Norman Kaighin, baritone 1955); Mrs Mona Huke, mezzo-soprano (1956).

For the first time in the history of the competition an English competitor won the medal in 1957. He was Mr Robert Kendrick, bass, of Birmingham.

**And it is a striking thing that in the 35 years' history of the competition the contralto finalist has never succeeded in winning the medal.**

The memory of prominent people connected with the Guild is perpetuated in various ways. The W. A. Craine scholarship reminds us of the many years of service he gave as secretary, the Noah Moore scholarship calls to mind the services of another notable conductor as does the Mary Purcell Black Memorial Cup given to commemorate another outstanding musician in our midst. Other awards also have reference to singers and prominent personalities connected with the festival.

The A. H. Teare Memorial Trophy, principal award in the dram section, which began in the early 1930's, also brings to mind the close association of the one-time Member for Ramsey with the Guild.

The status which the Festival has nowadays is indicated by the fact that very distinguished musicians are brought over as judges, the Festival is affiliated to the British Federation of Music Festivals of which Her Majesty the Queen is Patron, and the Presidents here are the Lieut.-Governor and Lady Dundas Chairman of the committee is the Speaker of the House of Keys, Sir Joseph Qualtrough.

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*Church Services in the Manx Language*

p. 6. Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1959

## **Church Services in the Manx Language**

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**T. E. Brown's Memories  
in 1896**  
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**Parish Clerks who Sang the Psalms**  
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**Troubles Caused by Off-Hand  
Translations**  
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**T**he recent promulgation of laws in Manx at Tynwald, by Canon C. A. Cannan, was a reminder of the part once played by the native tongue in the life of the Manx people.

In this article what was described by T. E. Brown in 1896 as "the gradual vanishing of the Manx language from the service of the Church." is reviewed and there are some interesting reminiscences by the Manx poet which appeared originally in the "Ramsey Church Magazine," a publication which was widely read in the years before the turn of the century.

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The ancient Church in Mann, Celtic in origin, appears to have accepted very placidly the changes brought about in consequence of the Reformation and from the scanty information available on this subject, it would seem that reforms took place very slowly. We do not read of any objection to them and it was in the post-Reformation years that notable work was done by prelates and priests alike in translations and teaching the people in Manx the Scriptures and also the Prayer Book.

T. E. Brown states: "I hardly know whether, when the Reformation discontinued the Latin services, we had the English prayers instead. There seems some reason to believe that the clergy tried, as best they could, to patch up a kind of accommodation between the languages, reading, I imagine, the English Prayer Book and rendering it into Manx extempore. One thing that is certain, and that is that Bishop Phillips' Manx Prayer Book was not used."

**The earliest printed Manx is the Prayer Book of Bishop Phillips in 1616, in which the spelling was entirely phonetic.**

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### *Church Services in the Manx Language*

About 1730 it is stated that less than a third of the people of the Island could understand English.

In 1764 the S.P.C.K. Said that "of a population of 20,000 the greater part speak no English."

Bishop Wilson, who had done much to educate the people and had translated the Gospels and provided books, was followed by Bishop Hildesley and his project was translating the Bible as a whole into Manx.

The literary status of the Manx clergy at that time made this possible and they undertook the work in sections, the different books of the Old and New Testament being apportioned out among them.

The Rev. Phillip Moore was the Bishop's right hand man both in revision and preparation for the press. With Mr Moore was associated a young divinity student – John Kelly, later Dr. Kelly, and author of a Manx dictionary.

#### **A PATHETIC MEMORY**

There is a pathetic memory associated with the completion of Bishop Hildesley's project. In the year 1772 he received the last part of the printed Bible – it was at Bishops court.

The same evening, a Saturday, with his family he sang the Nunc Dimittis "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace" and the Bishop seemed to sing the words with emphasis.

**It seemed prophetic for on Monday he was seized with paralysis and a week later he was dead and he was buried in Michael Churchyard near the grave of Bishop Wilson whose example he had tried so hard to follow.**

To revert to T. E. Brown's assessment of the Manx language position in the Church. He points out that Bishop Wilson realised that Bishop Phillip's Manx Prayer Book was of little use to the people. Governor Sacheverell said that the clergy translated the English Prayer Book "off-hand more to the understanding of the people" and this method of off-hand translation continued until the 1760's.

The Manx Prayer Book of 1765 seems to have been universally used though T. E. Brown was told that the English version was read once a month.

But a hundred years later the process seemed to have reversed to a Manx service once a month and three English services.

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There was a bi-lingual period where the balance was fairly preserved up to about the middle of last century.

The Manx poet writes: "My own recollection goes to suggest that the Manx services were gradually given up because the clergy thought they were not sufficiently attended."

Another curious factor mentioned by T. E. Brown is that he did not remember the occasional offices being read in Manx such as the Burial for the Dead and Solemnisation of Matrimony. He noted that Bishop Hildesley left special directions that his funeral service should be in Manx.

**In regard to weddings he stated that he had heard of a Wedding in Rushen where the service was in English and on coming out of Church the woman said to the man (in Manx), "Are we married, Billy?" and the bridegroom replied, "Faith, I don't know, gel."**

Confirmations were in English but the catechizing and preparation classes were largely carried on in Manx.

The story goes that once in Baldwin the Vicar of Braddan was conducting a Confirmation class and he asked one of the girls, "How did the children of Israel escape out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of bondage?" The question was asked in Manx, "I don't know, I never was in the land of Egypt nor in the house of bondage, never hadn't the clothes to go there. And that's the way the lies is getting about!"

The communion service was usually in English.

T. E. Brown said also he never remembered a baptism in the Manx language and he considered this reluctance to go in for a thorough use of the Manx Liturgy as very remarkable. He commented, "The acquiescence in a tongue 'not understood of the people' may have come down from the period of hocus-pocus and mumbling of masses."

He himself at one time knew the whole of the Liturgy in Manx and could undertake to go through much of Morning Prayer without a book.

### **THE OLD MANX CLERKS**

T. E. Brown described the old Manx clerk as "a delightful memory" and wrote. "The psalms, those translated in our Manx Book of Common Prayer, were sung mainly by him as a soloist and to tunes most weird and unearthly. How he struggled, how he varied, embellished, lost himself, made glorious havoc of the metre, rhythm, everything – a wailing and a desolation most unmusical, most melancholy! No one could correct him, no one could stop him. "Like a peelican' [sic] in the wilderness, and an 'ole' in the

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desert." he wandered on alone and irresponsible. I suppose the last men who read the Manx service were Mr Drury, of Braddan, Mr Caine of Lonan, and Mr John Qualtrough, of Bride."

The Manx poet's father Robert Brown, born in 1792, in Douglas, who took great pains with his sermons, found that translating them into Manx cost him immense amount of time and labour. He had a "floating acquaintance" with native idioms, but for so conscientious a man, so thorough in all he did, that was not enough. After composing his sermons he would get the schoolmaster (a genuine old Manxman) to come on Saturday on his way to Douglas Market. He would repeat the whole sermon to him. In this way the preacher avoided pitfalls in mispronunciation.

A mispronounced word could soon set the congregation giggling for instance - "And bring hither the fattened calf" (Luke |XV, 23 v.) the unwary preacher in the story of the Prodigan [sic] Son, might refer to Yn lheyi baiht (the drowned calf) instead of yn lheyi beiyht (the fatted calf).

In J. J. Kneen's "A Grammar of the Manx Language," some interesting comments are made as to the origin of the Manx language.

He wrote: "The only records that we have of even the existence of the Manx language before the 17<sup>th</sup> century consist of names of persons and places on Runic stones, and in the 'Chronicon Manniae' and the Rent-roll of 1511."

It is also noted that in the Northern part of the Island was spoken "a deeper Manx" than in the South.

William Kneen remarked that it was a constant source of complaint in Bishop Wilson's time amongst the Manx clergy that they were the only church in Christendom who had no version of the Bible in the vulgar tongue. Wilson set to work to remedy this.

The 1775 Bible, strange to say, differed from the English version in many points.

One instance is that in the English version (Job II 9 v.) Job's wife is made to say 'Curse God and die.' In the Manx version it is 'Guee gvs Jee dy ghoaill ersooyl dty vioys' (Pray to God to take away thy life).

There is no early literature in existence in Manx. The earliest book known to have been written in Manx is a translation of the Book of Common Prayer.

By Bishop Wilson's time, J. J. Kneen states: "Manx services were the rule, the English service being never heard in some parishes, but since there is no Manx Bible the clergy were in the habit of translating extempore from an English copy."

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*Entertainments of the Gay Nineties*

July 8<sup>th</sup> 1960

## **Entertainments of The Gay Nineties**

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**And A Sensational Show  
in 1819 at Castletown**

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**Visit of the Fire Proof Lady**

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**IN** the Manx Museum at present there is staged a small but unusually interesting exhibition of posters and pictures which show how the holidaymaker in the Isle of Man enjoyed himself in the gay nineties.

Paddleboats and Pierrots, the German Band, Ramsey and other memories of those days are brought back by these announcements and photographs.

In another corner of the Museum will be found a poster which gives a glimpse of how the gentry of Castletown were amused at the George Inn earlier in the century.

The poster advertises the visit of the Fireproof Lady who put her feet into boiling lead, swallowed molten lead, played with fire, and preformed quite a number of astonishing feats!

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First of all let us have a look at the entertainment for the visitor to Douglas in 1893.

There was the Bijou Theatre, opposite the General Post Office, which opening on Monday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, presented the great Henry Lisdon, eminent humorist, vocalist, ventriloquist, instrumentalist, etc., who was billed to appear in a refined performance called "Merry Moments" and patrons were also informed that the show was "as performed by him for nine seasons at the Crystal Palace."

The beautifully and elaborately fitted top price seats were 2s, the stalls 1s ("the most comfortable and commodious") and the balcony admission was 6d ("improved chairs.")

Or maybe the visitor would want to wander out of town a little further and go to the Belle Vue Gardens where there was the Indian Pavilion and dancing in the Concert Pavilion. Also on view were "wild beasts and monkeys," a fresh water lake, a switchback railway, etc.

**"THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH"**

*'Peeps into the Past' article in The Courier [Isle of Man] 1960*

by Syd Boulton

*Entertainments of the Gay Nineties*

In 1892 the big attraction was the visit of Elphinstone's famous circus which was staged at the Victoria Landing Pier. This was described as "the greatest show on earth."

**Fifty tons of sea water were poured into a vast arena in 30 seconds and on this miniature lake were "real steamships."**

The water carnival was a spectacular feature and it was advertised as being "100 times more funny than a pantomime" and it was said that the machinery and appliances for this great production cost over £1,000.

At the Marina there was the Sidonia Ballet Group, Winora, expert rifle shot and other attractions.

Another bill dated 1882 in respect of the Grand Theatre and Royal Opera House calls attention to the grand opening night attended by Sir Spencer Walpole. A comedy drama "Frou Frau" in five acts was the main feature and it was preceded by another production "A Kiss in the Dark."

**An additional attraction was the fact that "the Theatre will be performed by Mr T. S. Greensill."**

The plays were by Miss Hilda Hilton and her company from the Royalty Theatre, London.

Another entertainment centre was The Pavilion Promenade, where a three hours show nightly could be enjoyed for prices from 6d to 10s 6d for a box.

The famous Palace was going strong and had the largest Pavilion in the world, also the "cosiest opera house out of London."

Customers were told that this resort offered "the biggest shilling's worth in Manxland."

**ON THE "NIGGER SHORE"<sup>1</sup> AT RAMSEY**

Even in these days the beach in front of the Prince of Wales Hotel at Ramsey is popularly known as "the Nigger Shore" and this is of course a reminder of the days when a minstrel troupe gave performances there.

One of the treasures in the Museum collection of photographs, on view in the exhibition, is one of the pierrots giving a performance and another of the Nigger minstrels during a show.

There is too a photo of the German Band on the Promenade at Ramsey in the years prior to the 1914-18 war. This is taken outside the Prince of Wales Hotel.

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<sup>1</sup> As it was known then - a term which is wholly unacceptable today.



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*Entertainments of the Gay Nineties*

Other photographs of general interest show views of Derby Castle, cars running on the railway which used to go from the Marine Drive to Port Soderick, and a horse-drawn wagonette at Ramsey with 11 on board setting out for a day's outing.

Another "gem" is a photograph of bathers in Victorian style costume having a dip at the Port Erin baths.

There is an album of 24 views published by William- of Laxey Glen Gardens. This "Golden Album" only cost 2d.

The saucy comic postcards of half a century or more ago are in another collection on view.

And more sedate coloured pictures show an old Cregneish lady in Manx costume, a fisher girl at "Port-le-Moirrey" and another at Peel, and there are pictures of Old Pete at his cottage at Ballure and of "Peggy of Tholt-e-Will, Sulby."

Two photographs of exceptional interest are "Haymaking at St. John's" and "Hunt Meet at Onchan"- this is taken outside the Manx Arms Hotel.

**A SHOW FOR THE GENTRY**

And now to switch to a much earlier entertainment at Castletown.

A poster preserved by Sir Ralph Stevenson from the family records is dated 1819.

This printed bill announces the visit of "Madame Gerardelli, the female Salamander and Fire Proof Lady, just arrived from Germany" to the ancient Metropolis.

At the top of the poster someone has written the words "By Permission of the Lieut.-Governor" and in another space the venue "George Inn, Castletown," has been written in.

The bill states that this show was "Patronised by the Royal Family."

It announces that the "Fire Proof Lady" will exhibit at the George Inn, and begs leave to present herself to the notice of the nobility and gentry of this town and its vicinity."

Then we read about:-

**"THIS PHENOMENON OF HUMAN EXERTION! ! !"**

Universally known in all the Metropolitan circles on the Continent by the designation of the Anti-Combustible Female having made her tour to this far-famed country for the

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1960*

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*Entertainments of the Gay Nineties*

express purpose of submitting her incredible exertions for the approbation of an enlightened public inspection.

"This evening, Tuesday, and the two following evenings she will exhibit the following proofs of her fire-resisting activities:

- 1.-Bare with her naked feet a plate of red-hot iron, which, while it sets the wood on fire leaves her feet unhurt.
- 2.-Undergo the torture by fire as used in the Spanish Inquisition.
- 3.-Positively pour boiling oil into her mouth, and then emit it into the fire and hold her hands and arms in midst. To prove the degree of heat of the oil a raw egg will be put amongst it, and taken out fit for eating.
- 4.-Drop on her tongue several times, a large quantity of burning sealing-wax from which any of the company may take impressions of their seals.
- 5.-Lift a quantity of melted lead with her hand, and put it into her mouth and then emit it into a plate for the inspection of the company.
- 6.-Positively pour boiling lead into her mouth with a ladle without the least symptoms of pain.
- 7.-Pass red hot shovels several times over her legs without the smallest injury.
- 8.-Put her bare feet into boiling lead and leave the evident impressions thereof.
- 9.-Dip her feet into "Aquafortis and polish the blackest copper halfpenny that can be produced to appear as new." - Aquafortis - i.e., Nitric Acid.
- 10.-Pass a red hot shovel over her head without singeing her hair.
- 11.-Pour the strongest Aquafortis on steel filings and trample on them with her bare feet.
- 12.-Pass a red hot iron several times over her tongue till it be cold, the effects of which may be heard by the company.
- 13.-She will pour Aquafortis into the hollow of her naked hand and polish the blackest halfpenny that can be produced.
- 14.-Pour the strongest Aquafortis into her mouth.
- 15.-Pass a cluster of lighted candles under her armpits without suffering the least pain.
- 16.-Pass her bare feet over a body of fire.

The amateurs of chemistry are requested to bring with them any materials they have to put the fire-proof nature of the exhibition to the test.

Madame Gerardelli will be most happy in cases of sudden fire to be called upon to help any fellow creature from perishing in that element.

Admission 2s and 1s, doors open at 7, performance to commence at 8 o'clock.

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1961*

by Syd Boulton

*In the Days of the "Oiel Verreys"*

Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1961

## **In the Days of the "Oiel Verreys"**

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**Singing of Christmas**

**"Carvals"**

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**Battle with Dried Peas – In Church**

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**THE** season of Christmas is still fresh in our memory and it is fitting that this week's article in our series should deal with the popular Christmas Eve observance of the old days – Yn Oie'l Verrey which in latter times has been extended so that the service is held at odd times in the winter – not related to the season of goodwill at all.

Oie'l Voirrey – to give it the more correct spelling- means the Eve of Mary's Feast. The description which follows is taken from a book "The Christmas Morn Carol Service of Celtic Countries," written by A. Stanley Davies, and which first appeared about 10 years ago.

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The earliest mention of the service is that given by George Waldron in "A Description of the Isle of Man," 1726, but there are carvalyn – carols of earlier date. Eight of them are dated 1721, 1725 and 1728. The most important statement is that the service was at midnight on Christmas Eve "on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, towards evening, all the servants in general have a holiday, they go not to bed all night, but ramble about till the bells ring in all the Churches, which is at twelve o'clock." At a later date the service was held after dark, and lasted the greater part of the night.

The Church was decorated in a rather rough and primitive way with branches of hollin – holly and festoons of hibbin – ivy. Evensong was then held in the early afternoon in daylight as there was no artificial lighting in the churches. So each member of the congregation brought their own candle, candles specially made for the occasion. Three – branched candles were one type, another was "a big candle made for the occasion," which would burn for a considerable time." The service was very popular and attended by all except the gentry. It had been looked forward to for some time and the greatest of preparations was the writing of a new carol by the local poet, who would himself sing it for the first time in church at Yn Oie'l Verrey.

After the prayers were read, presumably this mean Morning Prayer probably with the Psalms omitted, the parson usually went home, leaving the Clerk in charge. Then each

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one who had a carol to sing would do so in turn. As there were many singers and as their carols were very long, the longest has 400 lines, which means a hundred verses, the proceedings continued to a very late hour.

**It is therefore nor surprising that the young unattached men at the back of the church got bored, or that the young women in the congregation pelted them with dried peas.**

In fact the parched peas were one of the features of the evening and the habit was only stopped about the 1860's.

The singing of the Carvalyn was the real centre of the evening. While anyone could get up and from their own pew sing a carval of their own composition or repeat a popular and accepted carval, another way was for a singer to start at the West end of the church and take a step towards the Communion table at the end of each verse. Sometimes the singing of a carval would be done by two men one on each side of the church.

Presumably the two carvalyn known in Question and Answer form would be sung in this manner. They are very effective carols with the final verses sung in unison.

A very detailed account of the services is given by William Kennish in a carol, for such it is, recalling Yn Oie'l Verrey as he knew it in Maughold in the early years of the nineteenth century. Another unusual carol called "Christ's Coming" details the unruliness which descended on the carol singing as the evening dragged on, and strongly reproves such conduct in a sacred edifice.

#### **A VISIT TO THE INN**

Another feature of the evening was the journey home. A considerable proportion of the congregation would visit the nearest inn, here they would partake of the traditional drink on such occasions, mulled ale:- that is strong bitter beer warmed by the fire, flavoured with spices, ginger and pepper. In addition to jough vie – good ale, an extra large candle had been prepared for the evening, and the burning down of the candle in its socket was the sign to bring the evening to an end by singing the parting song.

Carvalyn are numerous, and only a selection has appeared in print. A. W. Moore published some 11,000 lines, and P. W. Caine printed 5,000 more in the "Isle of Man Examiner" between 1915 and 1917. Since then C. I. Paton copied out 5,000 more lines, and he considered that even then there was a large amount still in M.S.S. In the hands of the peasantry. But this comes to the formidable 21,000 lines, which at 4 lines to a verse add up to 5,250 verses. This would make over 250 separate poems each averaging 20 verses.

**This is a considerable body of poetry for a small nation of 20,000 people'.**

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by Syd Boulton

*In the Days of the “Oiel Verreys”*

“In Carvalyn Gailckagh,” 1891, A. W. Moore collected and published 86 carvalyn. Only six of these are on the Nativity, and eleven others mention it. The remainder deal with the Old Testament and the Aprocrypha [sic] in narrative form and paraphrases of “Paradise Lost” and “Pilgrim's Progress.” All of them add a moral lesson and call for repentance. There are also the considerable number of May Day and Summer Carols. One however, is written in the spirit of an Interlude of the later Medieval Age and is a discussion between the disembodied Soul and its Corpse in the grave as which of them was to blame for their joint damnation!

A wide range of subjects, a narrative form like the ballads, and a stronger moral tone are typical of carolau in Wales and carvalyn in the Isle of Man. Both also tend to be very long some so long they must have been written only and never sung in their entirety. In this respect they differ greatly from English carols. However there was a method in the Island of reducing them to a reasonable length for public use.

**The singer lit a taper (presumably a rushlight) to read his manuscript, and when the taper burnt out the carol was ended!**

The Manuscript Carvalyn. - The genuine Manx literature – the native vernacular Gaelic literature is entirely manuscript. This literature consists of ballads. Those on sacred subjects being called carvalyn. Many of these songs have been handed down by writing to the present time. Some of them possess considerable merit. They are preserved in uncouth-looking smoke-stained volumes in low farmhouses and cottages situated in mountain glens. They constitute the genuine literature of Ellan Vannin. About twenty of these volumes, home made and bound by country cobblers are now in the Manx Museum. There are many more in the hands of the country folk.

This collection of Carvalyn Gailchagh appear to show that there existed in the Island a traditional ballad-style which preserved a number of archaisms in accidence and vocabulary. It is a universal feature of poetic diction that it invariably lags behind the language of prose. It cannot therefore be a matter for surprise that carvalyn composed less than two hundred years ago should preserve grammatical forms which are absent from the prose of the early seventeenth century Prayer Book of Bishop Phillips.

#### **EARLIEST CAROL 1721**

The Ortography of Manx and its Manuscript Literature. The real native literature of the Isle of Man is all manuscript or oral. What is manuscript is preserved in home made books of ballads and carvalyn. This raises the question of how old is the art of writing in Manx. The earliest dated carval is 1721 but Bishop Phillips M.S. Book of Common Prayer was written about 1610. So references to this subject usually refer to this the oldest M.S.

Manx spelling of the present day is to be traced back to the system of orthography in which Bishop Phillips tried to write the translation of the Prayer Book. The latter, in its

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*In the Days of the “Oiel Verreys”*

turn, claim kinship with that of the book of the Dean of Lismore and both belong to the Columbian School. This learning comes from the Celtic Church in Ireland. This in turn was descended from the Latin writing practised in Southern Britain during the Roman occupation. The link is the identity of the lettering on the inscribed stones in Cornwall, Wales and Ireland.

There is therefore evidence of a written literary tradition in the Island of great antiquity. So far the only Manx M.S. Examined for this purpose is the Phillips Prayerbook, but the large collection of carvalyn in manuscript deserve investigation first for the traces of Celtic script, and secondly for their preservation of old pronunciations preserved in what has been called “their weird spelling.” Their editing without “modernising” their spelling would reveal new knowledge of the Manx language. The only writer on this aspect of Manx literature has been Prof. Sir John Rhys who devoted a chapter to it in his notes on the Manx Prayer Book – The Outlines of the Phonology of Manx Gaelic, in 1894.

The Music of Yn Carvalyn. -This class of Manx traditional music is that most generally known, and the singing of it in public has survived the longest. They can be regarded as ballads on sacred subjects. Many of them are particularly interesting, as illustrating a very conspicuous characteristic of Manx music or for that matter of Celtic music, viz.-the prevalence of the Dorian Mode. This mode differing essentially as it does from modern major and minor scales lends a peculiar flavour which, despite its strangeness at first hearing, has nevertheless a very decided charm of its own.

Manx music has been singularly free and untrammelled [sic] in its growth. Born of the human voice it is essentially vocal, and it is notable that in the case of some of the carvalyn, the airs lend themselves with difficulty to harmony of any kind. The intonation of the native singers is singularly free and elastic.

The same elasticity applies equally to time and accent, in singing as well as in the recitation of poetry. At times there is almost total absence of a definite metrical accent and in its stead and even smoothly-flowing rhythm relieved here and there-often in the least expected places-by a pause of indefinite length. That is to say, the phrasing was singularly free. All through the singing of a carol the words rule, the music merely follows.

The singing of a carol in Welsh or Manx is an art and much depends on the skill of the performer to bring out the finer points of the carol.

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1962*

by Syd Boulton

*Place-lore of Michael and Ballaugh*

January 12<sup>th</sup> 1962

## Place-Lore of Michael and Ballaugh

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**Penitents Who Danced  
Scottish Reels**

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**Gleanings from a Manx  
Scrapbook**

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One of the most fascinating studies concerning happenings of the old days in the Isle of Man is in regard to place lore and the traditions attaching to particular districts.

This article concerns the parishes of Ballaugh and Michael and is based on the information collected in W. W. Gill's "A Manx Scrapbook".

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The parish of Ballaugh boasts of the Curraghs which is a preserve of all kinds of bird life, a Church which must be the oldest still in use after Kirk Maughold, and two war memorials!

**And the Church figured in a notable landmark in ecclesiastical history because it was the scene of a notorious episode which led to the abolition of public punishment or "panance".**

In the time of Archdeacon Philpott (1827-1838) he instituted Church reforms which were long overdue.

The affair at Ballaugh is described in his own words as follows: "By degrees I abolished many old superstitious customs such as swearing-in to the amount of the debts claimed on the grave of the deceased debtor while standing at its east end, also the custom of doing penance in a white sheet in the chancel.

"many of the cases dealt with in the Vicar-General's Court were clerical delinquents who had misbehaved themselves. The affair which led to the abolishing of penance was this: Three bad characters at Ballaugh, in scorn of Church rites, led a horse into the porch of the Church on a moonlight night and, tying a white sheet upon its head, made a game of baptizing it. The case came before me and I passed the sentence of excommunication, which included penance in white sheets in Ballaugh chancel. I charged the Sumner to place himself in the road-loft within sight of the penitents and report next Consistory Court at Ramsey.

**"The Sumner reported that they passed the time dancing Scotch reels.**

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*Place-lore of Michael and Ballaugh*

"After that I made a general appeal to put an end to these old Popish relics which was ultimately successful, though the new Bishop for some reason did not like it".

A later writer recorded that in 1888 he conversed with a man who remembered the performance of penance in Ballaugh Church about the year 1832 and the Vicar-General ending it soon afterwards.

The "new" Church (1832) is a Bishop Ward Church with a dedication to St. Mary. The old world [sic: word?] "Ballaugh" means "Our Lady's Place").

Coast erosion has taken its toll at Ballaugh and at the point where Ballaugh River joins the sea there was a small croft – Cass-ny-Hawin – on which stood a building, "Hackett' Tower". This was swept into the sea. Another croft, Crot y Grazy, also disappeared at this point. About half a mile north-east of Orrisdale stood Keill Pharlane ("Bartholemew's Church") and this, too, was lost due to the crumbling of a cliff.

"Scroundal" was once a "great fairy place" and it was said that on the grinding stone of the mill the "li'l people" would sit with lights in their hands and would sing. 'Twas said, too, that the 'Fenoderee' himself lived among the gorse and oak trees which encircled 'Scroundal'. An old lady of 80 told of hiw [sic: how?] her father was very ill after cutting down gorse and one oak tree wherein a spirit dwelt.

It was said, too, that in the bogs above Glenshoggle there was a 'Tarroo-ashtey' which was sometimes seen about and disappeared into the wet places. It was often heard shouting before rain.

Manx tree lore shows that it was a custom to plant a tree at the time of the birth of each child: the growth and vigour of the tree was then supposed to have an intimate connection with the health and influences of the family.

**In one instance quoted by Gill, shortly after a tree was destroyed or injured the family received news from Australia of the death of the son whom the tree was understood to represent.**

The drine, or thorn tree, was reckoned to be the centre of fairy activities. To sit under one too long was inadvisable.

Scroundal, besides being the name of the trees, was commonly applied to the mill and its neighbourhood.

In the parish of Michael there has stood for hundreds of years the seat of the Bishops of Sodor and Man. Bishop's Court is a building which dates back many, many years and King Orry's Tower is 13<sup>th</sup> century in origin and may have been a tower of refuge.

The parish living is in the hands of the Crown and formerly belonged to Furness Abbey. This is a Bishop Ward Church also and the graveyard contains, near a fragment of the old church, the



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*Place-lore of Michael and Ballaugh*

graves of Bishop Wilson, Hildesley, Crigan and Thornton-Duesbery.

Another ancient spot is Cronk Arleigh – the “Hill of the Renevrling” - where two Tynwald Courts are believed to have been held in 1422.

Gill writes: “The Courts of 1422 were held at Kirk Michael, obviously with the intention of overawing the Bishop and leaving him no excuse for neglecting the summons to attend and do fealty with the Earl”.

He suggests the site of Rencullin on the fringe of the Bishop's demesne and not Cronk Arleigh which is near Glen Wyllin, two miles from Bishop's Court.

Or even more likely it is thought by the author, from reading the records, that the Court was held in or immediately outside the churchyard at Michael.

Little London has no connection whatever with the Metropolis: the name is derived from 'Lunnon', a common name in Scotland in various forms and normally meaning “marshy place”.

Coast erosion has also had its effect on the coast of Michael through the years.

Old maps and charts show a bank near the north-west coast of the Island called “Heward”, which probably adorned the maps long after it vanished from the sea; but by the fact of its being marked it must have been of some importance. A map of 1700 sited it off a river entering the sea approximately at the junction of Michael and Ballaugh.

Thwaite's History states: “An island named Newan, given in ancient maps as being on this part (Michael sheading) of the coast, has entirely disappeared.

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1962*

by Syd Boulton

*A Flashback to the 1890's*

May 4<sup>th</sup> 1962

## **A Flashback to the 1890's**

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**The Fourth Music Guild**

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**First Bazaar of "The Shakers"  
Chapel**  
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**THE** old newspaper files make a fascinating study and events from April to July in 1896 are recalled in this week's article.

The "Courier" was then twelve years old and some of the happenings of those days will be remembered by an ever diminishing band of veterans. For them these jottings from the "Courier" file will revive memories of a period of great development. For the younger readers they give a picture of life in this part of the Island sixty-six years ago.

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First let us have a glance at the "Music Competitions in Douglas" to quote the 'Courier' heading in April, 1896.

These were the fourth annual contests, and the report said that the size of the Palace, the venue for the event, "filled many of the competitors with dismay."

But the writer said it was to be preferred to the Opera House which was a depressing room lacking light.

The pieces for the soloists were criticised as being too difficult.

The village choirs earned praise from our critic – and from the judge, Mr Harry Bridson's Cronkbourne Choir came first and Miss Gill's choir from Andreas second.

The combined choirs gave a concert which was attended by Lord Henniker, the Governor. Among the prize-winners Miss Wood and Miss Cannell had a great reception also Mr Harry Wood.

The "Courier" scribe concluding his report lamented: "Music from ten in the morning until ten at night is rather more than we care for or can appreciate, still we must acknowledge that 'it was good to be there'".

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1962*

by Syd Boulton

*A Flashback to the 1890's*

In the month of April also there was another notable event, the annual dinner of the Isle of Man Agricultural Society in which the speeches dealt mainly with horse and cattle breeding in the Isle of Man.

The venue was the Mitre Hotel, Ramsey, and about 30 guests were present. Earlier in the day the spring show of horses and cattle had been held at Milntown.

**NO SUNDAY OPENING AT ANDREAS**

In Licensing matters there was controversy over a seven-day application for the Grosvenor Hotel, Andreas, applied for by Sydney Smith. It was said there was a demand by people in wagonettes for refreshment. But there was opposition from 25 residents headed by Mr Wm. Radcliffe, Ballaradcliffe.

**He told the Court that the hotel had a seven day licence fifteen years previously but Archdeacon Moore got it reduced because navvies from the railway were going there and getting drunk at weekends.**

The application was refused. But another for a retail liquor licence by Arthur Henry Faragher, 1, North Shore Road, Ramsey, was granted.

In the latter case the proceedings were hotly contested and there was a petition from 122 residents in opposition and the police also opposed.

When the decision was announced in Court there was loud applause and the chairman rebuked those responsible.

In regard to new buildings there was a new Church Room opened in Kirk Michael on Easter Monday. The cost was £326.

Five lamps of 100 candle power each were given by the Sunday School scholars of Kirk Michael and Spooyt Vane.

One of the features of the opening was the concert presided over by Mr J. Mylchreest, M.H.K., J.P. The Michael String Band led by Mr J. B. Keig "gave evidence of much improvement," and Mrs Kewin, of Ramsey, was loudly recalled for her song "The Lost Chord" followed by another favourite "When the tide comes in."

**The sad news was received of a disaster to the Peel fishing boat "Quickstep." Four of her crew were washed overboard and drowned when on the way to Tralee Bay for the mackerel fishing.**

A big event in Ramsey was the arrival of the new Lifeboat the "Mary Isabella." She took over from the old "Mary Isabella" which was towed to Whitehaven by the steamer Manx Maid. The new life boat was towed to the Island by the steamer "Fenella."

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*A Flashback to the 1890's*

### **ELECTION "PRESSURE"**

In the Commissioners election the figures were published of the voting at various stages in the poll. At noon Mr T. Cowley led the field with 107 votes.

Later after the Commissioners' candidates had "pulled up a little owing to the Commissioners' employees and others having pressure brought upon them during the dinner hour" the Ratepayers' candidates were not so far ahead. But in the end the Ratepayers' men were successful - Mr T. Cowley 244; Mr J. McCormick 243; Mr W. Corkill 122, and Mr T. Callow 121.

The 'Courier' complained that the Chairman of the Commissioners (Mr W. Brew) had retained his position as Returning Officer "in spite of the strong feeling against him."

**Also that "Mr T. Callow, one of the Commissioners' candidates, sat for a time next to Mr Brew in the booth and peered into the face of every elector as they presented themselves.**

He was also taking a note of their names."

The first bazaar and sale of work in connection with Ramsey's Independent Methodist Chapel was held in the Pavilion and raised £40.

In 1892 a small syndicate had bought the old Chapel for just £200. There were then only 12 members.

**It was said on the occasion of the bazaar that some people had christened the congregation "The Shakers" but some preferred to remember it as the Old Ranter's Chapel.**

In the local football world the big event in April was when Ramsey brought home the Association Cup after defeating Gymns at Peel.

The train bearing the players and many enthusiasts arrived at 9-30 p.m. And was met by Robbie Crellin's coach driven by a pair of horses. The team rode in state through the town to the Old Cross Hall where there were speeches to a crowded audience.

Among the speakers was Mr Williams, President of Tranmere Rovers, who praised the game and especially the performance of Ramsey's goalkeeper – Chas. Caley.

A penny increase in Ramsey's rate to 1s 9d caused a storm of protest. The ratepayers also had to meet with a 1s 10d Mooragh rate, which was an increase of 2d and also pay a special South Promenade rate.

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1962*

by Syd Boulton

*A Flashback to the 1890's*

There were long reports of the vestry meetings in those days and it was said that the collections at St. Olave's averaged £3 per Sunday and the Easter offertory for the Vicar was £26.

**At Bride a Tonic Solfa Class was reported to be flourishing with a membership of 60.**

The class was under the direction of Mr Daniel Joughin assisted by Miss Etta Joughin.

Messrs Lays, tailors, advertised men's suits (hundreds of patterns) at from 14s 6d to 42s.

It was announced that for Whit Week 15 sailing boats would be available for hire on the Mooragh Lake.

### **CONFERENCE OF DEBATING SOCIETIES**

A Debating Societies Conference held in Ramsey was attended by representatives from about 15 organisations from different parts of the Island with a total membership of about 570.

Dr. Sugden presided over the Cricket Club meeting in Ramsey and it was said that a new pitch had been secured in the May Hill district.

Owing to the popularity of Glen Wyllin and Glen Dhoon resorts, Mr J.J. Corlett gave up his cabinet making business in Ramsey to give more personal attention to these resorts.

A drawing appeared in the 'Courier' of the "Ramsey Hydropathic Establishment now in course of erection."

It was reported that building operations in connection with the Hydro being built on the Beachmount estate began on May 21<sup>st</sup> and the first sod was cut by Miss Edith Cowley in the presence of a number of shareholders.

**Another news item stated that "Mr James Boyes has been appointed private detective to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company."**

The Misses Woolnorth of Douglas, opened a private school in a new house – in Station Road, Kirk Michael.

### **EARLY CLOSING – 8-30 p.m. !**

Sixteen drapers and milliners in business in Ramsey signed a notice headed "Early Closing" announcing that they would close each evening except Saturdays at 8-30 p.m. sharp.

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by Syd Boulton

*A Flashback to the 1890's*

There was some newspaper comment about the fact that the first Mayor of Douglas was included in the Tynwald Day procession – he was described by the 'Courier' reporter as “the out of place individual” walking ahead of the members of the House of Keys.

**By a majority vote Ramsey Commissioners turned down a move to leave the Park open at night and the Park Keeper was instructed to see all the wicket gates were closed.**

Receipts at the summer agricultural show at Ramsey amounted to £187.

**THE QUALITY OF MANX BUTTER**

Another dinner was held after the show in the Mitre Hotel and Deemster Gill complained in his speech of the quality of Manx butter and said it was “tainted with the taste of turnips.”

A whole column of the courier was devoted in September to describing St. Paul's Church Choir annual outing to Douglas where Hengler's Circus was a big attraction. They travelled in three horsedrawn vehicles supplied by Mr John Kennedy. The party of 33 was in charge of the Curate, Rev. E. C. Paton. [NOTE BY DJR: 'in the charge of' ?]

A picnic was held on the way at the Cloven Stones at Garwick. Several dozen bottles of Mrs Curphey's home-made ginger beer were distributed and soon disappeared. Then the travellers walked to the top of Baldrine Hill before getting on the traps again. The afternoon was spent in Douglas and the choristers assembled at Tom Bowling's restaurant for tea and the return journey to Ramsey was begun at 8-20 p.m. Ramsey was reached three hours later.

Another report about the same time stated that Slieu Lewaigue Hotel was entirely gutted by fire.

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1962*

by Syd Boulton

*Music Makers in Mann*

14<sup>th</sup> September 1962

## Music Makers in Mann

The Days When Every  
Family Had a Violin

Melodies "In the Fields in Summer  
and Barns in the Winter"

**B**ETWEEN 60 and 70 years ago a great effort was made by Deemster Gill, Dr. John Clague and Mr Wm. Henry Gill to compile a collection of Manx songs from various sources and this led to the publication in 1896 of the book of Manx National Songs, with English words, arranged by Mr Gill.

The book was the outcome of years of research and was the first real attempt after a lapse of many years to "collect and preserve from the oblivion into which it was rapidly passing all that remained of the National Music of the Isle of Man."

A fitting reminder of the debt we owe to those who practically saved our national airs and melodies from extinction is the exhibition - "Music in Mann - which has been staged at the Manx Museum this summer and illustrates the development of music in the Island from earlier times.

James Chaloner, Governor of the Isle of Man, said in 1656 of the Manx: "They are much addicted to the violin so that there is scarcely a family in the Island who more or less do not play it."

And George Waldron, writer about Manx customs of that period stated: "Dancing with the fiddle and bass violin is their greatest diversion. They have it in their fields in the summer and in their barns in the winter."

But it was not until the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Manx language was dying out that the old customs were losing influence that an effort was made to record and preserve Manx folk music.

Fortunately, there were men like W. H. Gill and his brother, Deemster Gill, and A. H. Moore and Dr. John Clague who were determined that this music should be handed down and they gathered it from traditional singers such as Tom Kermode of Bradda. Some of his songs are in the Clague Notebook, there are too the Carval (carol) books,

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the "smoke-stained volumes in cottages" enthused over by George Barrow, compiled by the local surgeon and mainly of a religious character.

**The tune "Ramsey Town" was found for instance in a picturesque cottage in Jurby.**

The English words were provided by E. Crabb and W. H. Gill arranged the musical setting.

### SEARCH FOR ORAL MUSIC

In his preface to *Manx National Songs*, W. H. Gill wrote about the search for oral music.

He stated: "I had gone to the Island in the hope of being able to gather for myself material at first hand. The old generation of untaught singing milkmaids and whistling ploughboys and the race of itinerant fiddlers who used to delight the frequenters of the village inns, and the cosy chimney-corners of the farm houses, and the lasses and the lads that danced in the barns at the mhelliahs or harvest homes – these rustic musicians had passed away and the old tunes were being replaced by the tunes of the London music-halls. However, I still cherished a hope that by a carefully arranged plan of campaign we might yet discover in out-of-the-way spots on the mountains and among the solitary glens a remnant of the old folk who might have still retained some of the earlier tunes hitherto unrecorded. Nor were my hopes in vain."

Gill by this plan managed to add to his original collection.

He said: "With the assistance of my brother and by the kind co-operation of many friends, we had the good fortune to interview in different parts of the Island quite a goodly number of old Manxmen of ages ranging from 65 to 84 all more or less musically gifted and some of whom in their younger days enjoyed a local reputation as singers in Church, Chapel, farmhouse or inn.

"The Manx people are proverbially shy but that was an insignificant detail. By dint of coaxing, the intervention of boon companions and in some cases the judicious application of bribes in the shape of little presents of tea for the wives and tobacco for the husbands we soon got over their shyness and in a very short time our ancient minstrels were warbling as in the old times and were ready and willing to give us 'all the tunes that was at them.' We shall never forget the enthusiasm of these old men and the genuine delight with which they recalled songs and memories of the past."

Dr. John Clague, of Castletown, recorded in notebooks tunes of the old days. He spent a lot of time with the old folk and recorded about 315 tunes and variants.

The Preface to Gill's *Manx National Songs* says that a collection of over 260 local melodies had been recorded – some were complete, some were fragments only and some were variations of other tunes.



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An earlier attempt – in 1829 – to preserve Manx tunes did not get very far. These were 13 tunes very imperfectly written down and arranged and published under the title “The Manx Melodies.”

At that time apart from a few other tunes in manuscript this was the entire recorded collection, Manx music having remained for the most part oral and traditional.

In the old days access to published music was limited and it was the practice for people to make up their own music book.

**On exhibition at the Museum is a five pronged pen which was used for staff notation. It belonged to Mr Shepherd, the first recorded writer in the Island about 1809.**

**“MUSICAL APOSTLE OF THE ISLAND”**

Mr Shepherd has been described as “the musical apostle of the Island in those days, an educational propagandist with a popular method of sight-singing. This was the 'Fa sol la mi' method which was popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”

The Museum exhibition includes some of the early music instruments.

There is a pitch pipe for setting the pitch which belonged to Shepherd and another which was made and used about 1860 by John Kneen, father of J. J. Kneen, the Manx linguist.

Also preserved is a serpent, and 18<sup>th</sup> century instrument used in Churches and predecessor of the bass horn.

The late Mr George Kewin, Town Surveyor in Ramsey, owned a serpent which was subsequently presented to the museum.

This was played in St. Paul's, Ramsey, by John Boyde, prior to the installation of the organ in 1852.

There is a music book in the Museum collection which belonged to John Sayle, of Andreas, player of a serpent.

Of special interest in the Museum collection is a violin made in 1897 by Alfred Moore, of Douglas, an instrument of high quality.

Copies of songs which are displayed include “Graith my Chree” - two Haydn Wood pieces “I bended unto me a bough” and “Guardians of the Empire,” written by T. Stephen Keig.

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There are other contributions by Noah Moore and “Bells of Old Kirk Braddan” and “Gel of Ballasalla” with words and music by T. E. Brown.

There is a modern example – Dr. George Tootell's “Manx Scenes.”

And of unusual interest are the seaside melodies in the late Victorian and Edwardian period sung by Marie Lloyd, Florrie Ford, Dan Leno, Harry Randall, George Robey and others.

There are other favourites too such as “Kelly from the Isle of Man,” and “Flanagan, Flanagan,” sung at the Derby Castle, The Palace, and Falcon Cliff and holidaymakers danced to the melodies played by orchestras conducted by Oliver Gags, Harry Wood, E. Boggetti and others.

**The Falcon Cliff theatre boasted “60,000 candle power of electric light”**

Those who visit the Museum exhibition will note the programmes of musical shows through the years.

The story of the development of music in Mann is very effectively illustrated.

It is worth while noting that some of the songs which have been unearthed call to mind historical events.

“Ny Kirree fo Naightey” “The sheep under the snow”) [Note by DJR: the first bracket is missing] is perhaps the most distinctively Manx of all our songs, and demonstrates the prevalence of the Dorian mode, found especially in the carol tunes. (Dorian mode is playing the same notes beginning and ending on D, no sharps or flats).

“Sheep under the Snow” is the first of Gill's Manx National Songs.

Next comes “The Cruise of the Tiger,” the words of which are by A. P. Graves from the original ballad [sic: ballad?] of John Moore, formerly of Camlork, Braddan, one of the crew of the Manx privateer “Tiger” during the war with France and America.

“Hush Little Darling” is one of the best known songs, “The Wreck of the Herring Fleet” recalls the disaster of September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1787, off Douglas. The song tells of “Mourning the loss of twenty-one, on that black twenty-one of September.”

**ILLIAM DHONE LAMENT**

The execution of Illiam Dhoan (Brown William) at Hango Hill on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1663, for alleged treason, is the subject of another ballad. This is a lament and the original air is unaltered, and the composer unknown.

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Another lament concerns the crime and penance of Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester (1441) whose banishment to St. Patrick's Isle, Peel, is related in Shakespeare's Henry VI.

Probably the best known of Manx tunes is "Mylecharane." Gill states: "It has always been associated with a silly ballad quite unworthy of music. T. E. Brown admits the tune originally must have been allied to better words. Dr. Clague suggests that the title may be a corruption of 'Moyalley Chiarn' ('Praise the Lord')."

There is too the historical ballad "Thurot" describing the naval battle fought of Ramsey in 1760.

Of special interest in W. H. Gill's book are "The Good Old Way," the revival hymn of the Primitive Methodists. "Hunt the Wren" sung by itinerant singers on St. Stephen's Day, the traditional "Orry the Dane," "A Manx Wedding," "The Battle of Santwat" (1098) and the "Manx Fisherman's Evening Hymn".

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by Syd Boulton

*Music in the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century*

September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1962

## Music in the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century

### Choirs and Bands

#### Instrumentalists in Churches and Chapels

LAST WEEK'S article dealt with music in Mann and this week we continue with the story of itinerant musicians and bands which existed more particularly in Douglas before the turn of the century.

This extract is from a book published in 1901 by James Cowin.

Mr Cowin declared: Music, Musicians and Bands of Music were not neglected in our middle century life.

"There were some enthusiasts then in the line who like Miss Wood in past quarter century kept pegging away for the cultivation of the native talent in the art, and choral societies, singing classes, brass and reed bands in quantity, if not, in quality, were the result.

"Whether a Town's Band should be provided for the benefit of visitor and native is still an unsettled point. It may be, no doubt, will be, news to the younger generation to know that we decided this matter about 50 years ago; not only was it a necessity but we actually accompanied it by voluntary subscription and had had for two seasons at least a most excellent band which played nightly in the town; but the most effective and appreciative bandstand was in two rowing boats.

**"When the tide suited along the seaboard of the town from Pollock Rocks to the Crescent, the people gathered in crowds along the seafront as the water seemed to give increased effect to the instruments.**

And if stormy we often had then rowed from the Red Pier to the Harbour Top and back – the people promenading on the quayside.

"This band had been one of the season bands and they had the perquisite of now and then accompanying a steamer trip for special fetes, etc.

"There were three brothers in the band – Irishmen – tall, gentlemanly fellows and what is still more surprising, they resided on the Island the first winter playing and collecting and were often hired out for parties, etc.

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**"They took up the role of callers, or fiddlers, at Christmas time and completely eclipsed and drove off the road the native talent.**

And I should say that never before, or since, has the Douglas people heard 'Christians Awake,' 'The Mistletoe Bough,' 'Auld Lang Syne,' etc., given with more sweetness and effect.

"Captain Quayle of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, lived in Buck's Road, opposite where Finch Hill Church stands now, and he frequently got serenaded by them, not only in recognition of past kindness but he was a generous and liberal contributor to them. My knowledge of these incidents is very personal as I acted, as the hon. Secretary.

"James Gelling, ironmonger, was treasurer and dipped into his own pocket very frequently to meet the payments.

**'A SCRATCH BAND'**

"In my early life I don't remember any kind of regular instrumental band of music in Douglas but there was a kind of scratch band that could be improvised for contingencies and special occasions. The two most important were the drummers. I have a very distinct recollection of the personality of the big drummer because whether he was buckled to the instrument or in the ordinary walks of life he carried himself in the drumming position with head erect and his back bent; he strutted along as if he was born to the profession – but with drum in front and sticks in hand he was at his best.

"After his rum-tum-tum he threw his drumstick fantastically into the air, and as he marched along, catching it most dexterously [sic] just in time to beat his accompaniment.

"The kettle or little drum was in the care of an old pensioner, Jemmy Carr, and to see him ran-tan-tan was a treat.

**"Jemmy carried his head to one side with one high shoulder and it was said that he got physically deformed by his devotion to the drum.**

All the musicians available were in request for Easter Monday's sailings to Conister but Jemmy in the stern of one of the boats could beat down and silence all competitors.

"The Douglas Band would have been nothing without its leader – Big Bill Creer, the tailor. He was a fine specimen of humanity. If a band had to march he would let tailoring, shop and house sink in order that he might with official staff in hand fogle, and march in front stepping out on his own important military style.

"When the Foresters made their first great and gorgeous show in Douglas, aided by the brethren and regalia from England, Billy Creer, in borrowed plumage, on a prancing nag, was the object of wonder and admiration for the regalia and adornments were the very things that would feast his vanity.

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"Billy finished his days in the House of Industry.

"The Douglas Teetotal Band was in full swing in the early 1840's and a very powerful and imposing body they looked. Richard and William Cowle were the founders and most liberal supporters. William very seldom played when marching but he was a good musician. Richard was for a time the big drummer but he left that for the large trombone.

"There were three brothers (Henry's) all considered fairly good musicians but the music that has 'charms to soothe the savage breast' did not influence their bad tempers. They were sources of great annoyance and I fear that these internal dissensions broke up a good band.

"Richard Brook, who married one of the Craines, had taken the pledge and became an active teetotaler and got so interested in the band that he presented them with an outfit of uniform that was said to cost over £60.

"There was also a Juvenile Rechabite or 'Temperance Drum and Fife Band' which for a time made a considerable noise in the Manx world. Alderman John Curphey had the reputation of being one of the best flautists in the land and the last surviving relic of the musical Douglas of my youth.

#### THE KARRAN BROTHERS

"There were three very distinguished bandsmen on the Island – Henry Karran and his brother, sons of Karran, the Santon schoolmaster and the sons assumed all the pompousness and assumed importance of the father. I think they must have been able to claim a kinship with the Karrans, of Peel, who were all of the 'most superior person' type. The Karrans specialised in brass instruments, principally the trombone and cornet.

"William Clucas was par excellence the bandmaster of Douglas, a son of Juan Barrule.' He was a most unassuming and shy man for many with half his ability would have pushed into the front rank of his profession. As a player of a clarinet [sic] he never had an equal on the Island and few in England could equal him.

**"Of Wandering Minstrels, local and foreign, there was no scarcity and 'Archie Cuckoo,' one of the 'Collins the Bruiser' family and forerunners of 'The Twins' were always in evidence.**

"Archie' in response to the boys 'Cuckoo' could always swear at them by a few scrapes on the fiddle and many undertook to interpret the words!

"The Choral Society of Douglas gave concerts, sacred and secular and these were a kind of gather-up of the local talent, some of them oddities.

"Perhaps the most popular Manx singer was Betsy Kewley, afterwards Mrs Fargher.

"The great outlet for musical ability was in connection with Church and Chapel Choirs but if a scratch choir had to be got together there was one man always to the front, Jack Kewley, the

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sawyer.

"For good all-round choir and good congregational singing, however, Thomas Street (Victoria) Chapel took pre-eminence.

**"Men and women of good social position thought it an honour to belong to the 'singing pew.'**

John Quiggin, printer, George Quaggin, builder, Manson the chemist, and others were most regular and devoted. Neddy Cain presented the first organ that ever was erected in a Dissenting Chapel in Douglas to Thomas Street Wesleyans.

"Wellington Street Chapel Choir was in the hands of Edward Corkill, baker, but unless members were strong 'in the singing pew' they had no chance.

The writer says that on Anniversary occasions regular singers were crowded out into the side gallery and instrumentalists came in including flutes, clarionettes, cello, small fiddle, bassoon, and trombones running out each side of the preacher's head!

"A great opponent of the introduction of the Church organ was the Rev. James Clelland who was at St. Andrew's and vehemently denounced the use of the instrument.

"But he was a lone voice and barrel organs and organs of various kinds were brought into the Island.

Records of St. Paul's, Ramsey, show that while the Clerk, as was customary, raised the tune in Church and sang the psalms at funerals on the way to Church, sundry persons were also paid from time to time for conducting the choir.

**In 1845 £4.16.3 was paid for a clarionet.**

Seven years later an organ was installed by Foster and Andrews.

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by Syd Boulton

*Summer Entertainments in 1902*

Friday, November 6<sup>th</sup> 1964

## Summer Entertainments in 1902

### Nine Shows in Douglas

JUST recently the Ramsey Swimming Baths – as they were previously known and now more popularly called “The Pool” by local people – has been in the news because of its closure.

The baths were opened on Saturday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, only three days before the unexpected Royal visit to the Island of King Edward, Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria.

Looking through the newspaper files for that period it is interesting to discover how much entertainment was provided for visitors sixty-two years ago.

It was a period when the Island was becoming more and more popular with holiday-makers. The Manx Electric Railway had been opened to Ramsey four years previously, there were big developments in both Douglas and Ramsey. Port Erin too had its Traie Menagh Swimming Pool and one noticed that a swimming gala in August with 12 events was a big attraction.

Hall Caine was interested in the Ramsey Baths and he was rapidly coming to the fore as a political figure also and in the following year was elected as Member for Ramsey in the Keys.

It was Hall Caine's play “The Christian” which was the principal attraction in Douglas that August in 1902. This was staged at the Grand Theatre.

At that time, following the death of Lord Henniker, Sir James Gell was acting Governor. In September followed the Coronation festivities and the visit of Lord Raglan who became the new Governor.

Douglas was throbbing with vitality in that busy season.

“The Christian,” as stated, was pulling the crowds in at the Grand Theatre, the lively musical comedy “Kitty Gray” was also highly popular at the Gaiety Theatre. This entire production had come direct from the Apollo Theatre, London.

At the Derby Castle (now being stripped to make way for a new amusement centre) there was a variety show with trick cyclists, clowns etc.

The Palace featured Jimson's Cirque, also W. Edward Kaye, the well-known character actor who performed Dickensian items such as “Uriah Heap.”

The newspaper announcement said that “Harry Wood's fine band was in the pavilion.”



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*Summer Entertainments in 1902*

**And in addition to this feast of entertainment there was "an exhibition of pictures by the American Biograph, affording an agreeable break at 10 o'clock."**

At the Hippodrome there were more variety turns with a "Bio Motograph" showing animated pictures.

These forerunners of the "movies" were attracting considerable attention.

At the Victoria Tower "at the top of the cliff at the north end of Douglas Bay," there was a camera obscura, electrical fireworks, stereoscopic views and transparencies, tennis, swings, and quoits. Oh yes, we almost forgot – there was additional excitement in the form of "ping-pong and see-saws."

### **MacLEOD'S WAXWORKS**

At the Masonic Hall, Loch Parade, people queued to see MacLeod's famous Waxworks. In addition there was a display of oil paintings and antiquities and items of archaeological interest, and also some ancient weapons on exhibition.

Mention must be made too of Buxton's Pierrot Village at Glen Lyon, Central Promenade.

And Charles Dare's minstrel troupe on Onchan Head – in their ninth season – were great favourites. The company were described as "Anglo-American Minstrels" and their songs patter and antics were a mixture which appealed to the audiences who flocked across the ferry.

A diversion for some people was the Shore Temperance Crusade. The campaigners evidently aroused some opposition from the onlookers for there was a series of newspaper correspondence in which one of the speakers - "T. T. Barwick," a teetotal propagandist, complained of being assaulted.

Another showpiece for visitors to Douglas in bygone [sic] days was the old convict ship which was moored in Douglas harbour. People were shown where the unfortunate convicts were kept in irons and other gruesome exhibits were pointed out.

There was the agricultural show in Ramsey that year and "very unfavourable weather" hit the event which was held at Milntown Park. The rain soaked ground added greatly to the difficulties and the receipts were only £70 compared with £190 at Douglas the year before. In 1900 the receipts at Ramsey were £135.

Bad weather too affected the Lifeboat Sunday parade in Ramsey and the collections only totalled £22.

An event of interest in the South, was the opening of the new St. Catherine's Church Hall at Port Erin.

Reference has been made to the "animated pictures" which were becoming a feature in some entertainments and these were introduced also in Ramsey and by 1910 Mr Tom Dyson opened the

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*Summer Entertainments in 1902*

Old Cross Hall for regular cinema performances and in 1912 the Ramsey Palace followed suit. Prior to 1910 occasional performances were given at the Old Cross.

Ramsey had its Buxton's Pierrots also – first of all there was a company on the South shore. Ever since this section of the beach opposite the Prince of Wales Hotel has been called “The Nigger Shore.”<sup>1</sup> And later Mr Buxton built a Cosy Corner site – this was where the Albert Hotel had stood previously – and this became a popular rendezvous.

To revert to the opening of Ramsey Baths that August morning in late August.

The opening ceremony was performed by Mr Hall Caine, who was introduced by Mr Tom Cowley, who led the company behind the project.

The opening ceremony took place on the Promenade in front of the tea rooms.

Mr Cowley apologised for the fact that the baths were “not more complete due to weather and open sea difficulties”.

In his oration Hall Caine described “the sea bath on the Promenade” as “like the deck of an Atlantic liner in the brightest [sic] and best air that can be had in the United Kingdom with the finest mountain and sea view to be found anywhere.’

He really “went to town” in his speech and painted a picture of the wonderful future which lay in front of Ramsey and he praised the Steamship line for reducing the passage from Liverpool from six hours to between 3 and 4 hours and spoke of the big opportunities which were now presented to the Island as a holiday resort.

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<sup>1</sup>*As it was known then - a term which is wholly unacceptable today.*

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1965*

by Syd Boulton

*The Story of the Good Ship 'Tyger'*

Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1965

## **THE STORY OF THE GOOD SHIP 'TYGER'**

### **A Venture That Failed**

#### **Tobacco Cargo Confiscated**

The story of a Manx venture to seize enemy cargoes, which is immortalized in one of the ballads in W. H. Gill's Song Book, is worth retelling. It concerns the good ship "Tyger" which was equipped at Whitehaven under a Manx skipper with a view to profiting by valuable prizes. But it was a project doomed to failure.

It is perhaps not generally known that in the days before Manx newspapers, in the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Manx news did appear from time to time in the "Cumberland Pacquet."

(The late Mr Phillip W. Caine went over to Whitehaven and did some research into the newspaper files and gleaned quite a lot of interesting information.

The first Manx newspaper – the "Manks Mercury" was not published until the end of 1792 and prior to this the Whitehaven journal "Cumberland Pacquet" reported Manx affairs more especially those dealing with shipping. (There had been a regular packet service between the Island and Whitehaven since 1767).

The Island in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was very much concerned with smuggling and other like activities. Smuggling appealed to Manxmen because it was profitable and exciting. At the time about 300 boats were engaged in the herring fishing so the sea was very much a part of people's lives and fortunes. Trading boats went to the Mediterranean and returned with cargoes of goods which would be later smuggled into England. Manxmen served too in all ranks in British brigs, sloops, frigates and cutters of the Navy.

The period 1774 to 1792 included the American War of Independence and Britain was in conflict with France also. At one time Britain had four enemies – the "rebels" of North America, France Spain and Holland. But Holland was "neutral" for a time and this, as we shall see later in this article, led to difficulties about commandeering their cargoes and ships.

Privately owned ships were employed sometimes for the purpose of harassing the ships of enemy countries and often these vessels and their cargoes were seized as "prizes."

The Government in fact authorised this by what were called "letters of marque."

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by Syd Boulton

*The Story of the Good Ship 'Tyger'*

And so when one such ship, owned by Manx merchants, with a Manx skipper, was prepared for "war" on these foreign "prizes" sailing the seven seas there was nothing very surprising in it and this might have been considered a good investment.

The story of the "Tyger" has been put into song in the Manx ballads compiled by A. W. Moore, Speaker of the House of Keys.

**Her history unfortunately has been described as being "short, unlucky and humiliating."**

To begin with the story of her career, it seems that the "Cumberland Pacquet" in 1778 advertised her purpose in appealing terms.

It was said, "To all gentlemen seamen whose hearts glow with ardour for the honour of the Isle of Man, Whitehaven, or other ports in Cumberland."

After this preamble the announcement continued, "Now fitting out of Douglas, Isle of Man, against the French and Americans, then proceeding to Montenegro Bay in Jamaica and then returning to the Isle of Man the ship Tyger (Captain Qualtrough) who served his time and was mate for eleven years with Captain Isaac Barnes a gentleman well-known here for his abilities and courage and did honour to the gentleman seamen who were in his employ.")

It was said that the boat manned 16 guns, with swivels etc., and carried 70 men and had safe protection for the crew.

An invitation was issued to "all gentlemen seamen who are desirous of enriching themselves upon the spoils of the who are willing to embark on French or the Americans and this vessel." [Note by DJR: this sentence seems to be missing a crucial word or two].

They were promised "full wages together with one quarter of the prizes which will be shared among them immediately upon condemnation."

"Let them report to Mr William Hailes, The George, Customs House Quay, where they will meet the greatest encouragement from Captain Richard Qualtrough. God save the King. Success to the Tyger and her brave crew."

It is reported in "Manx Worthies" (A. W. Moore) that the Tyger was bought for £3,645 and her gentleman owners were Hugh Cosnahan and Lewis Geneste, prominent Douglas merchants of that time. She was built and fitted out at Liverpool.

The Tyger's first and only prize was a Dutch "galliot" loaded with 289 hogshead of tobacco, bound from Bordeaux to Dieppe. The name of the seized vessel was given as "La Jenne Gelfie Whitteven de Lemoner."

Captain Qualtrough brought her into Douglas on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1779, and a few days later some of her crew were taken to Whitehaven for official questioning.

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*The Story of the Good Ship 'Tyger'*

The difficulty was that at that period Holland was a neutral country.

**COMPENSATION CLAIM**

And so the unfortunate owners of the 'Tyger' had to pay £60 for a settlement of a claim for compensation and £45 for the cost of refitting at Douglas.

Undaunted 'Tyger' set sail again in July and her next encounter was on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**She fell in with Sir Charles Hardy's fleet twenty-five leagues south of Scilly.**

The Romney chased the privateer from 8 in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon. As soon as Captain Qualtrough found this was an English ship he bore down on her and was detained in the fleet until next morning.

Then came an interview with Captain Johnson who came aboard.

It is recorded that he indicated he was there on "disagreeable business," that this was "an emergency of State" and that he had the Admiral's orders to impress the men of the 'Tyger.'

To "impress" men was the practice adopted on compelling them to serve in the Navy. Sometimes a press gang was employed.

At any rate 24 petty offers and 26 seamen were taken.

When it was seen that the 'Tyger' might be imperilled by this step she was permitted to remain with the fleet until a fair wind permitted her to sail home.

As soon as the opportunity occurred Captain Qualtrough shaped a course for the Isle of Man.

Normally the crew of privateers were legally protected from being impressed and there were times when this protection extended to the crews of Manx fishing boats. But this exemption could be withdrawn in an emergency.

Even the "Cumberland Pacquet" admitted in its columns that "the case of the Tyger is a very hard one."

It was pointed out that the vessel had been fitted out at great expense and had been unlucky in falling in with a Dutch vessel in her first venture and although she had again put to sea with high hopes they were deprived of success-not by the enemy "but by the same authority which encourages and issues licenses to merchants with the object of bettering their fortunes by chastising the common adversaries of their country."

The "ownery" of the 'Tyger' next moved for compensation and in reply Captain Johnson very fairly stated in his memorial to the merchants that he would "second" the plea in the warmest manner of which he was able.

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by Syd Boulton

*The Story of the Good Ship 'Tyger'*

The owners engaged Mr Erskine, later a famous Lord Chancellor and another distinguished lawyer named Dunning. They asked for an opinion as to whether an action for damages could be brought against Capt. Johnson. Mr Dunning advised they could not proceed.

The story ends sadly for in August, 1779, the 'Tyger' was offered for sale at William Lawson's, the White Lion, Douglas and only realised the sum of £1,260.

This was a sorry sequel to the happening of the previous year when after her voyage the 'Tyger' was met with music and the firing of guns as it was thought she had truly brought off a great prize.

Misfortune also hit another privateer. A Dutch ship was captured by a boat which had been sent to sea by the Marchioness of Grantham.

The prize was sent on to Liverpool while the captain of the privateer continued sailing and was then wrecked off the coast of Ireland and but two of her crew perished.

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**Dates In Manx History**

**November 12th**-Laa'l Souney. Hollandtide Fair.

Lord Fairfax, Lord of Man for eight years died, 1671. Mr A. W. Moore, S.H.K., died, 1909.

**Nov. 13th**-Lunatic Asylum Act, 1860.

Report of the Home Office Commission, 1911.

**November 14th**-Cooper Trial began, 1892.

**November 15th**-Day of thanksgiving for deliverance from cholera, 1849.

**November 16th**-Meeting to decide on a new street (Victoria Street) in Douglas, 1871.

**November 17th**-The Duke of Athol visited the new mine at Foxdale, 1822.

Mr. A. W. Adams, C.R. Died, died, 1882.

**November 18th**-Laa'a Spitlhin geuraih (St. Spitlhin's winter feast.)

St. John's Fair.

Professor Forbes died, 1854.

Dean Gillow died, 1900.

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'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1965*

by Syd Boulton

*Christmas is Coming and... Old Customs Recalled*

p. 8 Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1965

## CHRISTMAS IS COMING AND ...

### Old Customs Recalled

#### Singing Of Carvals (Carols)

**REMEMBER** the old saying "Christmas is coming and the geese are getting fat" - and the passer-by is exhorted to "Please put a penny in the old man's hat?" It seems appropriate to recall the old rhyme at this time and other customs connected with the festive season.

The Oie'll Veree, or Feast of Mary, was observed in Christmas Eve by the singing of carvals (carols) and in bygone days we read of farmers and fishermen attending the service in Church and then they would go to a public house and have a spree on Manx ale. It was called 'Jough-Vie' (or good ale).

A recent article in the Courier drew attention to the number of ale house in the Island – they were "ten a penny" as the saying goes and one did not have far to go as a rule to quench one's thirst.

It was traditional in the old days for every house to have a big candle made for the Oie'll Veree celebration.

The men would enjoy themselves with singing and jokes – and drinking – until the large candle burned down in the socket.

It was fairly customary too for the congregation after singing the carvals to adjourn to the nearest inn where they would partake of such fare as hot ale, flavoured with spice, ginger and pepper and the like.

After this the parting song would be rendered. "It is time to go home, to go lie down. It draws towards bedtime."

An account of 1844 gives the recollections of the Manx poet, William Kennish, in regard to the Oie'll Verrey at Maughold Church.

It was usually a very long service on Christmas Eve because of the length of the carvals.

Each member of the congregation brought his or her own candle so that the church would be brilliantly illuminated. Decorations in those days were primitive and consisted mainly of huge branches of holly and gestoons [sic. festoons?] of ivy.

Prayers would be read by the Parson, then a hymn was sung, and often the Parson would go home

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leaving the Clerk to take over.

Each person who had a carol to sing would do so in turn so that the service went on to a very late hour.

And there was concern sometimes too because the proceeding in Church became unseemly.

**It was sometimes the custom for the ladies in the pews to provide themselves with peas which they flung at their bachelor friends!**

The carvals too were composed sometimes with a local flavour and brought in topics calculated to give offence.

William Kennish's account mentions the supply of parched peas and of course the carvals.

One of this [sic. these?], he recalls, was on the wicked priests of Baal in Aprehrypal Book of Bel and the Dragon.

It was written and sung by parishioners with a grievance and contained a veiled attack on the parson at Maughold who was said to have encroached on their rights or something of the sort.

A carval on the Wicked Priests was preserved in manuscript but on examination one finds that in its original form it was harmless enough. The vocalist however may have read his own meaning and perhaps added a verse or two to serve his own purpose.

The pelting of worshippers with parched peas was so often the cause of disturbance that it ceased in the 1860s.

Kennish also mentions jocular remarks from "wags round the door" while a dull carval was in progress of being sung and this is complained of also in one of the carvals.

We are told that the old religious poems were written by men of all classes, including several clergymen, a sumner, two vicar-generals, a privateersman, several farmers, etc.

They were usually long and strange to say some of the longest were the best. They were often from a hundred lines to twice that length; two or three contain 360 lines. An incomplete version of one entitled "Lhig da'n slane seihil cur clashtyn" ("Let the whole world hearten") contains forty lines not found in the usual versions, thus making 400 lines for the complete poem.

The subjects are various. The nativity is not the most common topic though a few deal with it, one being a mere translation from the English carol of The Black Decree. Joseph's story is the basis of one of the most popular carvals. The evil woman mentioned in the Bible is the theme of another popular one (by the privateersman). Paradise Lost inspired another, and the influence of Pilgrim's Progress is obvious in more than one.

**A grim subject, hardly to be expected in a Christmas Carol, is a dispute between a**



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**disembodied soul and its corpse in the grave as to which of them was to blame for their joint damnation!**

But one view of it is that it is "written with restraint, thoughtfulness and feeling which raises it far above a mere 'fire and brimstone' sermon. It reminds one of a Latin poem on a similar dispute between the eye and the body, written in the time of Henry III and printed by Camden in his *Remains concerning Britain*.

In spite of a few carvals written in this gloomy tone, the majority are cheerful enough.

They are many in number. A. W. Moore published some 11,000 lines, and Philip Caine printed 5,000 more in the "Isle of Man Examiner" between 1915 and 1917. The books in which they were usually found were home-made volumes, bound in rough leather, brown paper or sail cloth – the pages often so much stained with damp and smoke that it is hard to read the faded ink, and the spelling is weird and wonderful. As to the authorship - "written by William Callister" at the end of the carval, may mean that he merely copied it into a book; but such a statement as "mettered by John Lewin" may be taken as proof that John Lewin put the chosen subject into metre.

The dates are mostly between 1760 and 1840, though a few may be as early as 1700 or earlier. They were sung in various ways. One way for the singer to start at the west end of the church and take one step forwards towards the altar at the end of each verse. Sometimes two men would get up, one on each side of the church to sing a carval. Probably it would be one of the carvals which have "Questions and Answers" in alternate verses.

One curious carval is ascribed to Dr. Walker, who was Bishop Wilson's Vicar-General, and shared the Bishop's imprisonment in 1722. He died in 1729, so the carval is at least as old as that year. Several customs are mentioned in it.

Christmas lasted twelve days in his time and for long afterwards, and the twelve days of Christmas are mentioned. Christmas customs therefore include all the festivities up to January 6<sup>th</sup>. He referred to the candles with which the churches were lighted up on this night as already stated, the "leggards" [DJR: See Note 1] card playing, friendly chat, fiddlers, and so on.

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**Dates In Manx History**

**December 24<sup>th</sup>** – Oiel Verree.  
Rev. Dr. Carpenter died, 1865.  
Bishop Straton appointed, 1891.

**December 25<sup>th</sup>** – Laa-yn-Ullick. (Christmas Day.)

**December 26<sup>th</sup>** – Laa'l Steavin. (St. Stephen's Day). "Hunt the Wren".  
St. Thomas' Church closed, 1867.  
Foundation stone of Braddan Church laid, 1871.

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**December 27<sup>th</sup>** – Laa'l ny Maccain. (Innocents' Day.)  
Kitterland explosion, 1852.

**December 29<sup>th</sup>** – Act for making and repairing highways and bridges promulgated, 1810.

**December 30<sup>th</sup>** – Heavy Gale.  
Several wrecks round the coast, 1873.

**December 31<sup>st</sup>** – William Christian  
(Iliam Dhone) condemned, 1662.  
Rev. F. B. Hartwell, chaplain of St. George's, buried, 1846.

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Note 1: [leggad = legacy, bequest, endowment; sweetheart, beau, partner, Valentine (sweetheart), boy (sweetheart), amour propre] Source: <http://www.ceantar.org/Dicts/Manx/mx28.html>

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by Syd Boulton

*Entertainments of Bygone Days*

p. 8. Friday, February 25<sup>th</sup> 1966

## ENTERTAINMENTS OF BYGONE DAYS

The "Bluebeard"  
Pantomime of 1883

Five Shillings A Box

**THE big musical shows of the winter of 1966 are being staged in the Gaiety Theatre in Douglas. How did our forebears enjoy themselves say in the year 1883?**

**If you turn back the newspaper files of that period you will learn that upwards of 4,000 people flocked to see the latest pantomime "Bluebeard."**

It was on a cold January night, when the gas lights flickered outside the Theatre Royal, the centre of entertainment sited between Wellington Street and Victoria Street. From all parts of Douglas people thronged to see (by kind permission of Samuel Harris Sq. [Esq.?] High-Bailiff) the 'exhilarating, uproariously funny pantomime "Bluebeard."

No fewer than 64 people were employed nightly in this production. Seats ranged from a tanner in the "gods" to five shillings for a box.

**The big attraction was the girl marvel- "Little Fairy Daisy" aged 3 ½ who could sing and dance in superb style.**

Patrons were able to get seats at half price from 9 p.m. and they were still in time for the "grand transformation scene" at 9-30 p.m. The Theatre Royal it is interesting to note was first opened in 1858.

The first records of a theatre in Douglas actually date back more than half a century before that. Tenison's Theatre is mentioned by the Duke of Rutland in a visit he made in 1797. He described the plays as being performed by "a most miserable set of actors." The show ended about midnight.

The first Douglas Theatre following Tenison's Hall or Theatre was opened about 1809 and there was also an entertainment room in the Coffee Palace on the Quay and at the top of the Quay was Banks' Dining Room and Playhouse.

This was sometimes called "Downward's Long Room." It was a building 50 ft. by 40 ft. near to the premises where Clinch's Brewery later had their establishment.

The Theatre Royal at the Pier opened in 1822 and there was also a theatre at one time at the corner of Prospect Hill and Athol Street. The Derby Castle "home of variety" opened its doors in

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1877, the Grand Theatre in Victoria St. (now the Regal) in 1882. The Pier Pavilion was opened in 1905 and later the Royalty Cinema was erected on the site. The magnificent Palace Ballroom opened in 1889-was destroyed by fire in 1920 and rebuilt and the Villa Marina opened in 1913.

**SWEEPSTAKES ON PIGEON SHOOT**

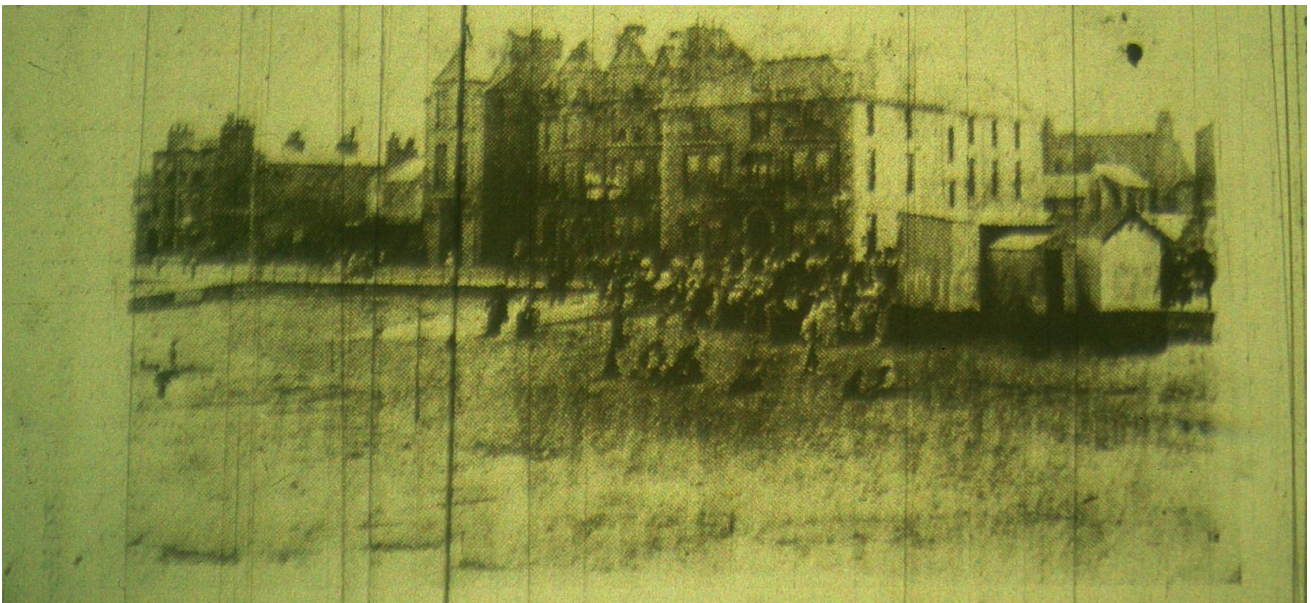
However to switch back to the 1880's. The accounts of 1882 tell us that a shooting match was to be held at the Railway Hotel, Ballaugh, when several sweepstakes would be shot for. Over 100 pigeons had been secured for the encounter with the first pigeon being trapped at 1 p.m.

At Greeba a pigeon shoot was billed to start at 1 p.m. at the Half-Way House.

But surely the piece-de-resistance of the entertainments at the time was a great spectacle on Greeba Mountain.

It was announced that following a grand luncheon there was to be a grand illumination of the picturesque mountain of Greeba by Professor Caldwell "engaged by the proprietor at great expense."

**And in the evening the hundreds of spectators were regaled with the grand mimic eruption of Mount Vesuvius**



[Photo of: "Minstrel troupe entertaining on Ramsey's 'Nigger' shore<sup>1</sup> in the years before World War I and before Buxton's Cosy Corner pavilion was built.]

**on the summit of Greeba Mountain! Those were the days.**

A delicacy advertised at that time was in respect of the oyster saloon (next to Dumbell's Bank in

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<sup>1</sup> As it was known then - a term which is wholly unacceptable today.

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Douglas).

Here the fare included London's Natives at 5/6 for 20, while Dutch varieties sold for 3/8 per score. Cheapest oysters were Blue Points at 7/- for 150.

#### **A WIRE DANCER AND A DWARF**

Many years before there had been travelling performers and companies touring the Island. The earliest known record is of Lord Vaux's Players to Castle Rushen in 1603.

In 1772 Bisset, the famous wire dancer, performed in Castletown and in Ramsey.

And in 1796 a Polish Count who was a dwarf, 39 ins. in height, toured the Island with his guitar and violin. He was also a competent dancer and all round entertainer. He wrote a book on his travels later and included a reference to the Isle Of Man.

Turning again to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when entertainments became more general.

Belle Vue as we know became the venue in Douglas for circuses, and exhibitions and the like.

In Ramsey a small site between the old R.C. Chapel and the Lifeboat House was used for performances by a travelling circus.

#### **THE PIERROTS**

Then came the era of the pierrots towards the end of the century.

Before them - according to the late Canon E.C. Paton – the Island had been visited by various theatrical companies, conjurors, handbell performers, quick change artists, Christy Minstrels and Panaramas [*sic*].

These latter were pictures on large rollers at each side of the stage and they slowly unrolled while the lecturer explained each picture, appropriate songs often being given as well.

There was the Pepper's Ghost Company who specialised in productions like "The Christmas Carol," "Faust," "The Haunted House," etc.

There were Penny Readings and "Mirth for the Millions," humorous concerts, etc.

Roller skating came in about 1873. Sometimes when a hall could not be procured entertainments were staged in a large warehouse. Magic lantern lectures were also popular for a while.

But the pierrots provided the holidaymaker with a light entertainment which suited everyone.

Pioneer over here in this field was the late Mr Fred Buxton. He had some experience of these in Rhyl and came to the Island before the turn of the century. He first began in Ramsey where there

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had been minstrel shows on the beach by the Prince of Wales Hotel. To this day that section of the beach is known as the "Nigger" shore.

Later he built the Cosy Corner on the site of the old Albert Hotel on the South promenade and continued with pierrot shows up to the time of his death in 1920.

His son, Mr Douglas Buxton, continued for a time until Mr Tom Goode took over and he continued concert party shows there for many years.

Mr Fred Buxton had extended his activities to Douglas and established a "pierrot village" on the Crescent site in the years before World War I.

He was a talented musician and was a one time a band conductor-this would be about 1910.

Another of his enterprises was the swimming baths at Port Erin which he had for a time.

Concert party shows were of course a feature for many years on Douglas Head and also at Lesley's Pavilion, Port Erin, which was burnt down.

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1966*

by Syd Boulton  
*Laa Columb Killey*

Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup> 1966.

## LAA COLUMB KILLEY

### An Old Parish Festival

#### Byegone (*sic*) Events In Kirk Arbory

LAA Columb Killey, the old parish festival which year after year is one of the highlights of the social round in the summer in the South of the Island is to be held next Thursday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, and it is appropriate this week to recall how this event came to be started and also to relate for modern readers some of the history of the parish of Kirk Arbory whose good people are maintaining the tradition of a Fair linked with the Patron Saint of the district.

Actually the name of the parish is derived from its Church dedication to the Irish saint, Cairbrie of Coleraine. Earliest record of this is in a Papal bull of 1153 where it is described as "terra Sancti Carebrie," but less than 100 years later we find it is given the dedication of St. Columba. Its designation changes again in 1798 when it is called "Chairbrae or Colum killey." And so we have today's title of the parish festival - rooted in tradition - "Laa Columb Killey."

The fair day of Kirk Arbory is now the only one retained in the Island (apart from St. John's which of course was anciently on St. John the Baptist Day, June 24<sup>th</sup>, and changed with the alteration in calendar) and of course Andreas hold their Ascension Day commemoration.

St. Columba's Day falls on June 20<sup>th</sup> but this year due to other events the celebration has been selected for June 30<sup>th</sup>.

In ancient times the Festival was observed on the anniversary of the day on which St. Columba died on the steps of the altar in the Cathedral of Iona - Whitsun Day, 597.

It was customary for services in Arbory Church on the Feast of St. Columba to be followed by public games and rejoicings.

**It was a time, too, when people got together to do "a bit of business" in the Churchyard and this was probably the origin of the Manx fairs which were a feature of trading for a long period.**

In the course of time it was forbidden to hold gatherings in Churchyards and they were moved to the common or village green.

St. Columba's Fair, styled "Ballabeg Fair" in more recent times, was held always on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and is still remembered by the older people.

For a time the Festival almost died out and in recent years it has been vigorously revived and is

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*Laa Columb Killey*

held on the nearest Thursday to St. Columba's Day when ever practicable.

It is believed that the idea of a Parish Festival following on the dying out of the Fairs in the Island was conceived by the Rev. John Kewley.

He had been Curate at St. Paul's, Ramsey, under the Rev. George Paton and was promoted to be Vicar of Arbory in 1891. He became Rector of Andreas and Archdeacon in 1912.

### **So the Festival in its present form dates back fifty odd years.**

It is thought that following the success of the Coronation celebrations in connection with the late King George V it was decided to hold similar festivities in a revival of the parish festival.

### **THE FRIARY**

Arbory is a centre of historical background.

At the Friary Farm there is the only remaining portion - the Chapel – of the small Franciscan House, known as Bemaken Friary. This was for centuries used as a cattle shed for the farm.

It has now been cleaned out and restored to some extent.

The site assigned by the Earl was "in the village of St. Columba" and leave was given to the Irish branch of the order to build an oratory, bell-tower, cemetery house and necessary offices for twelve brethren "without infringing the rights and appurtenances of the Parish Church."

The Parish Church contains part of a carved oak rood-screen probably brought from the Friary at the Reformation. The Gothic characters refer to the Stanley legend of 'the best scion of the child found in the eagle's nest.'

### **CAPTAIN QUILLIAM**

The Church has a monument to Captain John Quilliam who was a quartermaster aboard the Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. Quilliam was born in Marown, ran away from farming and was ultimately "pressed" into the Navy. At the Battle of Camperdown his courage brought him to the notice of Admiral Duncan who promoted him to Lieutenant. At Copenhagen he was on the Amazon engaging the forts and having a bad time. All the officers senior to Quilliam were killed and the Manxman took command. When the ship withdrew Nelson himself went aboard and invited Quilliam to join the Victory.

**For his pluck and resource in the Battle of Trafalgar Quilliam was promoted post-captain and returned with good prize-money, bought the estate of Ballakeighan and married one of the Stevensons of Balladoole .**

This family have been in Balladoole for centuries. Quilliam is buried in Arbory Churchyard. At Colby, which is also in the parish of Arbory, was born the Manx lexicographer, Archibald Cregeen



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(1774-1841). He was deeply interested in Manx literature and his dictionary was published in 1838. Of Cregeen George Borrow wrote: "I reverence the very ground on which that man trod because he was one of the greatest natural Celtic scholars who ever lived."

A keill in Kirk Andreas is St. Columba and a modern link between Andreas and Arbory apart from that created when Parson Kewley, as he was called, went from Arbory to Andreas, is that one of then 13 cups competed for in the 1966 Laa Columb Killey was subscribed by Colby folk in memory of an Andreas man who went down South to live in that district.

He was Louis Teare who was held in very high regard.

**Originally the people subscribed for a funeral wreath when he died but so great was the response that it was decided to perpetuate his memory in Laa Columb Killey in which he was very interested.**

The parish, it is interesting to note is in the patronage of the Crown and anciently it was in control of Rushen Abbey. Black letter panelling with the name "Thomas Radclyf, Abbot," thereon implies a renovation by Rushen Abbey about 1530. The list of Vicars goes back to 1291.

Some veterans will remember the ministry of John Kewley and many more will remember his successor - the Rev. F. W. Stubbs whose notes to the Manx Church Magazine were eagerly read because they were so original and humorous.

Parish notes, for Arbory in 1891 show there was a Dorcas Society flourishing and the Vicar (John Kewley) was vice-chairman and clerk of the school committee.

The Sunday School treat that year consisted of a visit to the Belle Vue Gardens at Douglas. The party watched a circus in the Indian pavilion and the former Vicar (Rev. C.T. Langton) who had been appointed to Bride joined the procession from the railway station.

**"VISIT TO THE BELLE VUE CIRCUS"**

The parish notes say: "It is needless to say how much the children enjoyed the programme, especially the performing dogs and elephant. The rest of the time was spent at the bear pit, the monkey house, on the grounds and in the concert pavilion where the bicycling and skating performance charmed the children. Some indoor games were played until 8-15 when a start was made for the railway station where cakes and sweets were distributed. Ballabeg was reached shortly after half-past nine when after three cheers for the Vicar and ladies the party broke up."

The Rev. John Kewley, writing in January, 1892, referred to a crowded Christmas Day service at which a collection containing 360 coins amounted to £1.10.1 and was given to the Coal Fund.

"On Christmas Eve the Balladoole Choir sang a number of carols at Mr Stevenson's residence" reads another extract.

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**PARISH PINFOLD**

At the Easter vestry the Vicar drew attention to the state of the fences of the parish pinfold and it was resolved that members of the Great Enquest, the wardens, the Captain of the Parish, and the Vicar should visit the place and apportion the parts to be repaired by the different land-owners.

This meeting was successful and the fences were put in repair and the Captain of the Parish nominated W. Duggan to be Pinner in place of W. Bridson who resigned.

When the Rev. George Paton of St. Paul's, Ramsey, preached at the Sunday School Festival, bad weather reduced the attendance but it was recorded that 561 coins produced a collection of £8.12.6.

As the congregation was leaving the evening service, Miss Moore, of Ballacross, fainted and later died from a stroke.

The big event of the year was the new Mission Room which was provided "through the kindness and liberality of Mr Stevenson." The building of limestone, was 32 ft. long and 17 ft. wide with accommodation for over 100 people. The contractor was James Cooper, of Castletown, and the room was licensed for divine service.

**PARISH HALL BUILT**

A Colby reader has penned the following notes about Columb Killey;-

At first, and for many years the function was held in the "vicarage field" with tea in the open air. The water, drawn from the stream, was boiled in a great iron boiler.

**Later, the parish hall was built by members of the Cooil family of Ballagawne as a memorial to a son killed in World War I.**

After this the tea was sometimes held indoors in the hall, but, that was never so well enjoyed. Then by the kind help of the Southern Show Committee, in allowing the use of a large marquee the tea has been served again in the festival field with the use of electric boilers and water laid on.

At first the festival was always located in Ballabeg but when no suitable field could be found in the village because of rotation of crops, it was occasionally held in Colby, the other village in the parish. Now it is held in each village alternatively.

The "exhibition" side of the festival has grown immensely and is recognised as probably the very best show of early produce. They have moved with the times too and included flower arrangement, fancy cakes, and machine-knitted garments, but have retained the old tradition in bonnag, knitted socks and rag mats, etc.

The parish school and its headmaster have always played a great part in the festival, and the children look upon it as their special day. Their writing and art is on show and they entertain with

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their country dancing.

About 1940, it was decided to help the Red Cross, so the Douglas Hospital Queen was invited up to lead the procession. This continued for a few years and then the committee decided to elect their own queen, and now this has become an important part of the occasion.

Altogether 14 cups and trophies have been donated either by enthusiastic admirers of the show, or in memory of great workers such as the late Messrs Arthur Collister, C.P., James Lowey and Sam Parry.

**Mr Frank Oates, retired blacksmith, has been made a Life Member, being probably the oldest living member of the first committee.**

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by Syd Boulton

*The Sound of Music – in Mann*

p. 7, Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1967

## THE SOUND OF MUSIC – IN MANN

### A Long Standing Tradition

**T**HE Island through its Music 'Guild' which began in 1892 has long had the reputation of maintaining a high standard of music and if we look through the records of earlier times it is evident that the Manx were a musical people with their own ballads and carvals (carols) and folk tunes some of which have been rescued from oblivion by the patient work of people like Dr. John Clague and Miss M. L. Wood.

Miss Wood was regarded as the “Mother of Music” in the Island - it was mainly through her efforts that the Music Guild was started and she spent the whole of her life here teaching choirs and solo singers, playing Church organs, and reviving musical traditions.

In January 1896, she gave a paper before the Tonic Sol Fa Convention entitled “Music Past and Present in the Isle of Man.”

**She pointed out that it was on record by Chaloner that in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was scarcely a family on the Island who had not a violin player in their midst.**

David Craine in 'Manannan's Isle' said that violins and viols were the only musical instruments mentioned in those early times. The fiddlers who played at gatherings in the Island generally went in pairs and often travelled long distances to fulfil engagements.

At church services it was the job of the Parish Clerk to 'raise the tune' for the singing and he also had to sing psalms at a funeral procession.

It is recorded at St. Paul's, Ramsey, that in 1845 £4.16.3 was paid for a clarinet. Music was also provided by Mr Killip, Clerk, who played the Bass fiddle and Mr John Boyde who played a twisting instrument called the 'serpent.'

An organ was not installed until 1852.

At St. Mary's, Ballure, a large Psalmadic or Barrel Organ was brought into use in 1787 and it was the first instrument of its kind in the Island. The Psalm tunes were composed by Dr. Miller, organist of York Minster, who did not publish the tunes at first but put them into the Barrel Organs.

A writer named Quayle, referring in 1812 to harvest festivals said “English country dances were unknown but jigs or reels in which four or five couples joined took their place, the fiddler changing his tune and often playing one of the few national lively airs preserved from early times and resembling the Irish strongly in character.”

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by Syd Boulton

*The Sound of Music – in Mann*

**FOUR PART SINGING**

At the end on the 18<sup>th</sup> century a Cunbrian [*sic.* Cumbrian] named Shepherd introduced four part-singing. He taught choirs in the various parishes and his terms were 10s. per head per quarter and 1s. for his book, this book being in his own handwriting on foolscap and lined with a five-pronged pen, the words also being clearly transcribed.

**He taught each part separately keeping the other parts outside until required to sing together.**

The females took the tenor part in those days and the tenor voices sang the air.

Shepherd beat time by opening and shutting his hand. He had a curious tubular wooden pitch-pipe. No other instrument was in fact used in Churches for many years.

The bass fiddle was then used as being 'less secular' than the violin, and clarionets and bassoons were added and gradually organs were introduced.

In Rushen Parish Church the instruments used were a clarionet and bass fiddle, in St. Paul's, Ramsey (referred to earlier in this article), the bass fiddle, clarionet and serpent were in use. Sometimes in Rushen a flute was played and the clarionet was used to give the note. Hymns were given out four lines at a time.

In Ballaugh Parish Church the instruments to be found were a cornopean (cornet) and a bass fiddle.

At Kirk Michael Church a bass fiddle, flute and trombone formed a curious combination.

At Arbory Church the old clerk, nearly 80 years of age, vainly imagined that he was a good singer and he always treated the congregation to the first verse of the psalm as a solo! Sometimes the congregation cringed when he did this!

Here the men of the choir sang on one side of the west gallery and the women on the other.

And whenever the females sang alone (their singing was always accompanied) they turned their backs on the congregation!

**FIRST ORGAN**

The first organ was introduced into the Isle of Man in the Government Chapel of St. Mary's, Castletown, about 1811.

The next to appear was in St. George's, Douglas, and of course this set the fashion and in the years following builders were busy putting in Church organs.

According to a book dated 1812 anthems were in use. The ordinary hymns were Tate and Brady's

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version of the psalms translated into Manx and the tunes commonly used were the English ones with repeats.

At Kirk Braddan where the services were alternately Manx and English there was an old clerk who was fond of inventing tunes as he went along and when asked for the source he would say they were, 'real Manx.'

On the occasions of executions at Castletown the gallows were erected at a place near where the railway station stands and it was an invariable custom on this grim occasions to sing the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, 'Have mercy upon me O God.' And the Parish Clerk would sometimes strike the tune.

Shepherd did much good work in the Island in teaching four-part singing and he was followed by a man named Cretney who used what was known as the 'Hullah' method. He took large classes and was quite successful in getting choirs together.

There are many stories told about the singing of carvals on Christmas Eve.

It was the custom to have an Oiel Voirree (Hail Mary) service.

[PHOTOGRAPH] 'Dr. John Clague.'



### CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

People made their own candles for it and carried their lights to Church. In Ballaugh they vied with each other as to who could make the thickest candle. These candles were often fixed on nails driven into the ends of the pews.

The evening service over, the parson would take off his surplice and he would announce that anyone who chose might sing carols.

**As can be imagined the custom led to abuse and one band of singers trotted out a carol which made reference to all the wicked women in the Bible.**

In Malew Church one local character known as 'Tom the Dipper' announced his carol as 'The Bloody Gardener' and he had to be stopped for brawling.

These carols were often sung as solos for thirty or forty verses. A man who was once silenced at the 25<sup>th</sup> verse began his carol the next year at the point at which he had been stopped!

In later years one or two choirs sang alternate anthems or carols, one on the gallery and another in

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the chancel.

But because of irreverence the Christmas Eve services were discontinued.

### IN THE SCHOOLS

In her paper given in 1896, Miss Wood stated that 40 years previously only one or two of the elementary schools taught singing by note. But a check taken during 1896 showed that there were 72 elementary schools in the Island teaching about 9,000 children and of these 51 in the previous year had earned what was known as the 'note singing grant' and 20 a grant for singing by ear.

Church music was reported to be slowly improving in standard, it was hoped to have a diocesan festival to improve matters further and the Wesleyan Society also proposed to form a society with the aim of improving music in the Chapels.

Brass band contests held annually in November were doing something to revive village bands which had fallen by the way in some places.

Then Gill's Manx Song Book was published in 1896.

Doctor John Clague did a great deal in collecting almost forgotten songs and airs for the book. Between 1890 and 1896 he collected more than 300 tunes.

A large number were taken down by him from the blind Thomas Kermode, a fisherman of Bradda.

The doctor himself was an expert musician and was responsible for creating a hymn tune – Crofton - 'Glory to Thee my God this night,' which has been included in several collections.

William Henry Gill was regarded as 'our most expert and scholarly musician.' He published over 200 melodies and he will always be remembered as the author of the Manx Fisherman's Evening Hymn.

**One of his discoveries was the tune 'Ramsey Town' which was unearthed in Kissack's cottage in Jurby.**

A Dalby farmer and local preacher, Thomas Quane, provided another notable folk-song. It had never been recorded and Quane had no words for it but as a preacher he had sung it to words in the hymn book. He gave the air to Miss Kate Morrison.

The story of its origin was that the song 'Arrane Ghelbee' would be heard over the waters from an old man with white hair when he was sailing his boat from Bradda to Niarbyl.

He was supposed to have rowed towards Ireland and was never seen again but someone remembered the air, the people of Dalby began to sing it and taught it to their children and then on to the next generation and so the air was preserved.

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Reference has been made to the Parish Clerk.

He was a person who more than a century ago was very important in regard to music.

At a time when only a proportion of the country people were conversant with English he read the psalm for the day, line by line, and then striking the tune he would get the congregation to sing with him.

So if the Parish Clerk was endowed with a musical voice he was worth his weight in gold.



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by Syd Boulton

*Musical Entertainments of the 1890s*

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1967

## MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENTS OF THE 1890's

### The Love Of Music

RECENTLY this series included an article on the history of Music in the Island, which aroused great interest and a contributor from Los Angeles, U.S.A., a Manxman who emigrated many years ago, wrote some comments and these form part of this week's feature.

But before that just a glance at some of the concerts and entertainments which regaled people in the Island in the 1890s.

On Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1891, in Rushen Hall, Port St. Mary, Dr. W. H. Hunt, Doctor of Music was the star performer in a concert in which he sang 'The Night Watch' and 'The Spectre Ship.' His nephew Mr F. W. Austin, sang 'Leaving yet loving' and 'Rose Marie.'

**A week later Dr. Hunt gave a free concert for the fishermen of Port Erin in the same hall.**

At that time there was also a Port St. Mary string band and they were under the leadership of Mr Jas. F. Clague.

At Christmas they paraded the parish with a strong choir of carol singers and a harmonium loaned by Mr Wm. Watterson was carried on a cart. This vehicle was provided by Mr Sam Watterson and the horse by Mr Tom Clague, of the Belle Vue Hotel and it is recorded that the instrument was ably manipulated by Miss Emily Anderson who was comfortably esconced [*sic*] in the cart.

From the report of an event at St. Paul's, Ramsey; "Mr A. Collins contributed a cornet solo and the concert was concluded with a whistling chorus by some ten or a dozen well trained boys."

At Patrick the 'harvest home' entertainment was provided by the Douglas Minstrel Troupe. There were about 18 in this group of artists—Mr. R. Cowle was interlocutor: tambos – Messrs Cowle and Garland; bones, Messrs Callow and Goldsmith; violin, Mr H. Wood; accompanist, Mr H. Rushworth.

From Sulby it was reported: "A most successful concert in aid of the clothing club was held. The church choir took part and sang two glees, the first of which 'The Whistling Ploughboy' was much appreciated." (Not a word about the other glee item!)

These concerts were a great feature of Island life at this period. The late Miss M. L. Wood went round the Island training choirs and groups and also founded the Manx Music Festival which dates back to 1892.

The 'Guild' was first held in the Palace which had been built three years earlier.

**'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1967***

**by Syd Boulton**

***Musical Entertainments of the 1890s***

The love of music was retained by many emigrants who left the shores of Mona and the Cleveland Medal, the principal solo vocal award at the Guild, is of course given each year by the Cleveland Manx Society in the U.S.A.

**"MEMORIES SWEET AND TENDER"**

**A MANXMAN WRITES FROM  
LOS ANGELES**

**Manxman, Mr. T. Donald Bain, of 5019, Halldale Ave., Los Angeles, California, 90062, liked our recent article on "The Sound of Music in Mann" so much that he has written a follow-up for the "Courier."**

He states in his letter - "The article 'Threat to Music in Manxland' also gave us something to ponder over so that we penned the article with that thought in mind and as a reminder to the young people of the Island of the importance of good singing. Miss Emily Christian, L.R.A.M., is to be congratulated on her life-long devotion to good music. Surely she has gone the second mile in the calling she loves. Our grateful thanks to Miss Christian and to the dedicated singers in her choirs who have done so much to bring good music to the home folks and by recordings to those of us who now dwell far from Mona's Isle. Our grateful thanks indeed."

Mr. Bain's article is as follows:-

**THE POWER OF MUSIC**

The late Mr Tom Fayle, one of the best-loved California Manxmen, had a saying that has stayed with me through life. It was, "Manx people will sing at the drop of a hat. How true this is. In our early years in California, our large Manx colony loved to sing. At home gatherings and at the largely attended Los Angeles Manx Society meetings always the first song was "Ellan Vannin." How these Manx people away from the Island could sing it, and some with tears in their eyes! Then when the time came to bid each other adieu, we raised our voices in the hymn that the first president of the Los Angeles Manx Society, the late Mr. Daniel Teare, and all of us loved so well: "God be with you, till we meet again."

My wife and I remember so well the singing times in our home. When we would entertain 20 to 30 Manx friends on summer evenings with windows and doors open, the singing of the old Manx songs and hymns would be carried to passersby. Some of them would stop and listen. The neighbours, bless them, would sit on their front porches and listen. More than once we had an audience on our own porch. The next day my wife would say to a neighbour, "I hope we didn't disturb you too much last night with our noise." Invariably the reply would be, "Why, no we enjoyed it. How those friends of yours can sing... Wouldn't have missed it for anything."

It has never been my privilege to study music, but its love has been in my heart from earliest memory. My mother loved to sing. It was at her knee I learned to sing the simple nursery rhymes and later she taught me the wonderful old hymns which have sustained me in the darkest hours of trial and disappointment.

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*Musical Entertainments of the 1890s*

Wherever there is life there is music, for God intended that it should be so. Even the birds which nestled in the trees around the old home of my boyhood in the Isle of Man awoke me each summer morn with their songs of exultation.

I have always believed there are special joys in life for folks who love to sing. Some years ago I made calls on a sick friend who had been in a nursing home for six years. One evening his first words to me were, "Don, the words of an old hymn have been going through my mind all day: 'Have we trials and temptations?' 'Yes' I replied. "That is an old favourite." I started to hum the tune. Soon the man in the next bed was singing the words of "What a friend we have in Jesus." "I haven't sung that hymn for a long time, but when you hummed, the words came back to me, the man told me. So it was many times later singing by the three of us gave us real joy, and a closer fellowship with each other.

**HUGH STOWELL**

One of the greatest inspirations of my life was during the years of the Second World War. Again music and singing came to the fore. On Sunday evenings at our Church at 53<sup>rd</sup> and Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, California, with a congregation of around 400 people of all ages, the church orchestra opened the service playing hymns for half an hour, then half an hour for congregational singing, half an hour for the pastor's message and finally, "Minutes of Melody," an almost one-hour programme of young people's hymns and choruses.

**One of the most popular hymns we sang was written by a Manxman named Hugh Stowell.**

Our song director would sometimes suggest that we hum a verse;

"From every stormy wind that blows,  
From every swelling tide of woes,  
There is a calm, a sure retreat,  
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat."

Hugh Stowell, who wrote 'From Every Stormy Wind that Blows,' was born at the Rectory of Ballaugh, Isle of Man, in 1799. He died in 1865 at the age 66. After school days in Douglas, Isle of Man, he went to St. Edmond's Hall, Oxford, England. Following in the family tradition he was ordained in 1823.

He became curate at various places in England. Then he was appointed Curate-in-Charge at St. Stephens, Salford, England. The bishop of the diocese, Dr. Blomfield, had been warned that the new curate might prove "difficult" on account of being a dogged Manxman." Never did a parish have so popular a preacher as he proved to be, and it was not very long before the small church became far too crowded by the enormous congregations that came from round about. His parishioners decided to build a new Church. In 1831 the fine new Christ Church, Salford, was built. He stayed there for the rest of his life.

His great love of children was well known. The greater part of his work was given to his Sunday

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School which had a large attendance. He was a born leader. His audiences listened to his every word. The church members would gladly do anything he asked of them. He became Canon of Chester and Chaplain to the Bishop of Manchester, England. Canon Stowell was a great Evangelical and throughout his life was a tremendous power for good. He was a writer of poems and a collector of hymns.

During his very busy years in Salford, he would slip away as often as he could to his old home at Ballaugh, Isle of Man. In the summer time he would find sanctuary as he walked over to the seashore, and from the headlands near the city of Peel, Isle of Man. He would watch the ships at sea, especially the Peel fishing boats as they returned from the harvest of the sea.

In winter time, Ramsey Bay had for him the inspiration that led him to write, "From Every Stormy Wind that Blows." Here in Ramsey Bay after the storm, he saw 'There is a calm, a sure retreat.'

Last November at our Church Senior Citizens Fellowship Club meeting we sang and hummed Hugh Stowell's comforting hymn. Then to continue on we sang the favourite, "Saviour, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise." This hymn and others were written by John Ellerton, 1826-1893, whom we like to think got the inspiration during the years he spent at the Ramsey Grammar School, for it was written during his first ministry in Sussex, after attending Trinity College in, Cambridge.

"If what I have written brings back 'memories sweet and tender,' perhaps two or three or more of my readers will gather together and sing the old Manx songs and hymns, as they did in days of yore; and if they have an old hymn book in which Hugh Stowell's hymn is written, they may try it out, humming one of the verses. Perhaps they will discover again as they think back over their experiences, the power of music, for it is always time to sing!"

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by Syd Boulton

*The Best-Ever Visiting Season for the Island*

p. 8, Friday 4th August, 1967

## **THE BEST-EVER VISITING SEASON FOR THE ISLAND**

### **Opening Of The New Kursaal**

#### **A Flashback To 1913**

**WHAT** were the events in the Island in that memorable record-breaking season of 1913 when 629,617 passengers were landed here by a busy fleet of Steam Packet Co. steamers?

This flashback tells the story of that highly successful summer in which a new kursaal—a development which cost £100,000 was opened in Douglas—and cinemas were springing up and in the theatres famous stars such as Florrie Forde, Vesta Tilley, Wilkie Bard and Bransby Williams were engaged to entertain the crowds.

Fifty-four years ago it was reckoned by many people that the season did not start until July 5<sup>th</sup> was over.

Burnley Wakes were just starting, there was criticism in the 'Isle of Man Times' that the Palace was not open by July 5<sup>th</sup> and the early holidaymakers were denied the facility of enjoying themselves in the finest ballroom in the United Kingdom.

#### **4,000 AT PALACE OPENING**

The Palace did open a week after (July 12<sup>th</sup>) and there were 4,000 people present. A programme of 15 dances was put on by the orchestra, other entertainment included life motion; pictures shown by means of Brown's Royal Bioscope. The Opera House had its own 'animated entertainment.'

Tynwald Day fell on a Saturday and there were fewer visitors about in consequence and it was reported that 'the fairground cheapjacks and hustlers shouted themselves hoarse to smaller audiences.'

But there was an abundance of red tape and it was complained that the Press were denied access to the pews in St. John's Church for the service prior to the promulgation.

#### **DIVORCE ACTS PROMULGATED**

As a matter of interest the nine acts promulgated included two Bills of Divorce—The Fisher Divorce Act and the Kinrade Divorce Act. (These were the days before divorce was permitted and it could only be achieved through a special Act of Tynwald).

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**Tradition was well maintained despite the appearance of a few motor cars—by the appearance of Colonel Moore's smart four-in-hand with two liveried footmen on the back seat and the Colonel himself 'holding the ribbons' as they said in those days.**

#### **FAST PASSAGES**

The Steam Packet Company's latest ship—the King Orry—did her maiden trip and recorded a speed of 21 knots.

But this was not to be compared with the speedy cross-channel greyhound—the Ben-my-Chree—which was described as 'the famous turbiner' with Capt. Keig (Commodore) on the bridge. She was regularly doing the journey between Liverpool and Douglas in three hours and ten minutes and three hours and a quarter. Her time-table was (from Liverpool)—Clock Tower—10-43 a.m.; Rook Light 10-48; Bar 11-25; Douglas Head 1-45. Return voyage—Douglas Head 4-9; Bar 6-27; Rock Light 7-3; speed to Bar 24.35 knots per hour.

Next day the Ben chopped seven minutes off this time.

In the early part of the season applications were made for the opening of the New Empire Theatre (this was a conversion from a former hall) and was under the aegis of Charles Dare who was already well-known for his pierrot shows.

#### **STRAND CINEMA OPENS**

The Strand Cinema was in course of erection and a licence was applied for.

Meanwhile the Gaiety Theatre show was 'Hindle Wakes' which was very popular.

The Derby Castle's new opera house was also getting into swing and the variety show included Sara Williams singing Tosti's 'Goodbye'—a favourite indeed.

The Grand Theatre Picturedrome showed 'no less than four feature films' and the top film was entitled 'The Black Countess.'

Buxton's Islanders continued to pull in the crowds—a good class pierrot show was always staged here.

#### **A CIRCUS**

Then there was Connor's Circus which had equestrian acts, acrobats, performing bears and a troupe of fox terriers.

Charles Dare's pierrots were entertaining on Douglas Head and at the New Empire he also ventured into films with the intriguing titles of 'Drink's Lure,' 'Lost on the Rocks' and 'The Truant's Doom,' to mention one programme of entertainment for the holidaymakers.

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Onchan Head Pavilion was another popular centre with three variety shows a day—at 11, 3 and 7-45.

Picturegoers were well catered for because in addition to the other places mentioned there was the Pier Pavilion which had three changes of programme weekly.

Later in the summer the bigger stars came to the variety theatres and among these was Florrie Forde, billed as 'the greatest chorus singer in the world.' She was a firm favourite at the Derby Castle. In the ballroom Harry Woods and his orchestra provided the music.

The Palace Company engaged the celebrated dancer La Pia. Vesta Tilley was another great star of the old days. Wilkie Bard, the 'world's greatest comedian,' appeared during August at the Derby Castle.

**Probably the biggest attraction of the season, however, was the appearance at the Kursaal of Dame Nellie Melba, the world famous operatic soprano, then at the height of her dazzling career.**

As the summer moved on to August Bank Holiday it was evident that this was really going to be a bumper season.

"Twenty-nine boats sail to Douglas to-day," was one of the headlines in a Manx newspaper.

The curtain-raiser to all this had in a sense been the opening of the Kursaal. This was the new name of the Villa Marina.

Herr Simon Wurt's Viennese orchestra had been commissioned and crowds flocked to the new resort.

The Villa Marina property had been acquired in 1910 and after that the grounds were laid out and the hall was built, and one report prior to the opening said, "it was decided to instal [sic] electric lighting at a cost of over £3,000."

Lord and Lady Raglan travelled by special train from London, along with some V.I.P.s and between 60 and 80 journalists also came to the Island for the big occasion.

### **MARBLE FOUNTAIN**

A marble fountain was opened on the south promenade of the Kursaal to commemorate the visit to Douglas in 1902 of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.

Lady Raglan switched on the water and the Mayoress (wife of Alderman Corlett) unveiled in the main foyer staircase a tablet to commemorate the inauguration of the Kursaal.

And now another look at the August entertainments. The announcements in the newspapers

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showed that the Grand Theatre had booked the famous picture 'East Lynne' for showing but there was also variety and the acts included Madam Ali, the world famous medium and Arthur Weber, principal bass in Liverpool Cathedral.

At the Douglas Holiday Camp the Thursday night sing-song at sixpence a time was nearly always a 'house-full' event.

Horse racing at Belle Vue was a season attraction which had quite a following.

Out-town resorts were developing also. In Ramsey the Old Cross Hall had been opened in 1910 for occasional film shows and in 1911 the hall became the first place in Ramsey to be lit by electricity. A year later the Palace opened as a cinema and the first operators were Manx Picturedromes Ltd., a concern which also had the Grand Theatre in Douglas.

Buxton's pierrot shows were a feature of the holiday scene in Ramsey.

**In Peel the new Picturedrome opened in Michael St. in the summer of 1913 and admission charges were 4d, 6d. and 1s.**

An attractive new building in Port Erin was Collinson's Cafe which could seat 300 and Tom Clague, senr., late of the Belle Vue Hotel opened the new marine hydro at Perwick which could accommodate over 50 people.

**£4,000 BLAZE AT LAXEY**

Laxey Glen Gardens was one of the most popular of the glens and it was a big setback when a £4,000 blaze occurred in the new pavilion and upset the season entertainment there for a time. Rescued from the fire were the instruments of McMillan's Glasgow Band who had been appearing there.

There were one or two other blemishes on the holiday scene.

**A STRIKE**

There was a strike at the Douglas Post Office where employees were asking for more pay and there was unrest among the men in the Douglas Tramway Service.

**Tramway workmen were paid 4½d. per hour for a week of at least 84 hours and they wanted 5½d. an hour which would in fact mean an increase in wages of 7s. per week.**

There was a clamour for this prosperous season to be extended and a fund was started among hotel and boarding house keepers to make this possible and an approach was made to the Steam Packet Company to keep their double daily service going until the end of September.

Outdoor events of interest included the swimming galas at Ramsey which were at this time the talk of the Island and some of the most famous swimmers of the day including R. S. Spiers, performed



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before the crowds.

The Agricultural Show at the Nunnery, held in August, drew many people. Looking at the entries one finds that the number of horses exhibited - 181 far exceeded the cattle entries totalling 117.

At the end of the season the public in the Island looked forward to the news of the arrivals.

**These were made known in October and the total for Douglas was 615,726 (compared with 493,073) in 1912.**

At Ramsey the total was 13,891 compared with 14,831.

The decrease at Ramsey was said to be due to the fact that more holidaymakers were travelling via Douglas instead of using the direct steamers.

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*Entertainment Galore for the Holidaymakers of 1888*

p.8, Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1967

## **Entertainment Galore For The Holidaymakers Of 1888**

**Bucks Road Skating Rink  
- Pony Trekking At Injebreck**

**Variety, A Circus And A Waxworks**

AN astonishing variety of entertainment was offered to the Douglas holidaymaker in the year 1888 and if one scans the newspaper files there is a long list of pleasure resorts which were in full swing from Whitsuntide to September.

it was an era of great development – new hotels were springing up, a new company was about to take over the Castle Mona Hotel and improve it—the “takeover bid” was £20,000—and we would say these days that it was “Swinging Manxland” and all kinds of new enterprises were getting into stride.

The opening of the 1880 season was heralded by announcements of increased steamer sailings, the old Company (the Steam Packet) the new Manx Line with two steamers and another boat operated on the Barrow route, all joined in competing for new traffic.

At the Bank Holiday rush in August the Steam Packet Co. carried 9,000 passengers from Liverpool, 4,500 from Fleetwood, the Barrow line brought 2,640 and the new Manx Line carried 12,813 from Liverpool making a total of 28,953 for the week.

In addition there were 600 Welsh Volunteers under canvas at Pulrose so Douglas was pretty crowded at that time.

And there were plenty of entertainments for the visitors.

### **A MANX FAIR**

There was a Manx Fair and a dance hall and a Lake for boating at Pulrose (this was in place of a much bigger project which had been planned and fell through—details of this later).

There was a skating rink in Buck's Road which was immensely popular, a circus was staged at Bath Place, and McLeod's Waxworks in the Masonic Hall were a sensation.

**One of the newest exhibits was of Dr. Cress, the Cork poisoner and there was another**

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*Entertainment Galore for the Holidaymakers of 1888*

**realistic representation of the scene at the beheading of Anne Boleyn.**

#### **DOUGLAS HEAD**

On Douglas Head there was a tobogganning slide and a switchback railway.

**At the Grand Theatre playgoers flocked to see "the new Manx play, 'The Deemster.'" by Hall Caine, which had been produced by Mr Wilson Barrett at the Princess Theatre, London.**

The Gaiety theatre opened later in the season because big alterations had not been completed.

One loss to the entertainment scene was the closure of the Grand Music Hall where Mr Dyson had put on entertainments. The hall was removed to enable more bedroom accommodation to be added to the Grand Hotel.

There were the Victoria Tower pleasure gardens near the top of Summer Hill and people queued up to look through the marvellous camera obscura.

The Blue Hungarian Band played twice daily at Handley's Bowling Green Hotel in Derby Road.

In the Egyptian Hall (late Assembly Rooms) on Loch Promenade, Professor Weber kept audiences enthralled with his conjuring and ventriloquist show.

The new Promenade Circus had a bill which included Nellie Reid the famous side saddle rider, a renowned equilibrist and a team of clowns. There was an art exhibition in another hall on the sea front.

**Eventually the Gaiety Theatre reopened and a crowded house watched the "great new drama" which was entitled "Mr Barnes of New York."**

In the rooms of the Y.M.C.A. in Wellington Street, Mr Thomas Beaumont, the celebrated elocutionist, gave a recital of Shakespeare's "Henry the Fifth."

But of course the two premier places of entertainment, competing against each other – were the Derby Castle and the Falcon Cliff.

Both places boasted of brilliant new electric illumination.

At the Derby Castle there was a switchback railway, the hotel had been modernised, large windows adorned the Pavilion, and a special feature was an exhibition of paintings of scenes of the Island—described as some of the largest ever executed. One painting of Injebreck was almost 20 ft. in length. Mr De Jong's famous Band provided music.

At the Falcon Cliff, Mr Oliver Gagg's orchestra was extremely popular; Charles Chilley, the famous tenor, and George Nicholson, a Yorkshire comic were among the entertainers.

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by Syd Boulton

*Entertainment Galore for the Holidaymakers of 1888*

**At Injebreck, a six miles drive from Douglas by horse drawn carriages, there was a Pavilion almost as large as that at the Falcon Cliff.**

There was a band who played twice daily, an enormous rockery was laid out for the patrons, and ponies could be hired by visitors to take them to the top of Garraghan Mountain.

#### **PROJECT WHICH FAILED**

One of the most ambitious projects ever conceived for the enjoyment of visitors was "The Manx Exhibition of Science, Art, Industry and Antiquity," which was to be erected in Pulrose.

The prospectus stated that the exhibition would be there from May to October. Buildings would be erected in the form of a quadrangle enclosing a space of 120,000 feet and consisting of sun spans, each 50 ft. wide and 30 ft. high forming Courts of which the principal would be the central or main venue. This would consist of two spans giving a width of 100 ft. and a length of 30 ft. The orchestra would be accommodated in the main building, there was provision for a Picture Gallery (with a fire proof asbestos roof).

Electricity would be laid on and also a gas supply for the use of exhibitors.

It was intended that the exhibition would "illustrate legends, romantic associations and antiquities of the Island gathered from various sources by means of loans, exhibitions, pictures, etc., with elaborate relics and reproduction of the most famous ruins in the Island."

There would be stalls to demonstrate the Island's main industries, National and Colonial Courts with a special section devoted to examples of the art of ladies.

An old Manx Fair was to be staged, a switchback railway and a Music Room were also planned and there were to be dining rooms, a canteen, a temperance cafe, etc.

The Manx Exhibition Company had its offices at Villiers Chambers and the manager was designated as Mr Charles Stevens, F.R.S.L., F.S.A.

If the Exhibition had materialised it certainly would have been a tremendous attraction but it seems to have been prepared on too ambitious lines.

There was more success with the Exhibition at Belle Vue in the summer of 1892. This ran for three months and the Chairman of the organisation behind it was Mr J. T. H. Cottier, with Mr W. M. Kerruish as secretary.

The general manager was Mr H. W. Pearson. Among the items of interest was an Educational section under the direction of the Lord Bishop and what was said to be the great "London Naval Exhibition," including a replica of H.M.S. Victory.

**This exhibition was indeed a memorable affair. There were acres of beautiful gardens, an**

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*Entertainment Galore for the Holidaymakers of 1888*

**Indian Pavilion, a Wild West show, a circus, Roman chariot racing—and an elephant!**

There were hundreds of exhibits concerned with the Island's arts and industries, a black and white minstrel show, two or three bands and the event was a resounding success.

'Peeps into the Past' articles in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1967*

by Syd Boulton 1959 – 1970

*Christmas Seventy Years Ago*

p. 8, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1967

## CHRISTMAS SEVENTY YEARS AGO

**70 Voice Choir  
In Gaiety Theatre  
Performance**

### **Distribution Of 400 Hot Pots**

THIS week the Island scene approaching Christmas and during the festive season seventy years ago forms the subject of our article.

It was a time of changes in the legal set-up. Sir James Gell had just been appointed Deemster and Mr G. A. Ring took his place as Attorney-General. The Governor was Lord Henniker and Bishop Straton reigned at Bishop's Court.

The chief entertainment in the Island for Christmas of 1897 and the New Year seemed to consist of dog and poultry shows and various concerts and there was too a programme of Soccer and Rugby matches—there were seven teams in the Rugby League at that time.

**Perhaps the most ambitious effort was the Douglas Choral Union's production "Billie Taylor" described as "something new" and in the form of a "nautical comical opera" with musical direction by F. C. Poulter and F. D. Johnson as stage manager.**

There were two performances and the show had a chorus of 70 voices and some of the leading people in musical circles and amateur theatricals in those days. W. A. Craine was hon. secretary at the time.

It was the custom also for the annual music contest to be held in Douglas on Christmas Day and there was said to be an entry of nine tenors and seven bass and baritone singers including some of the top singers in the Isle of Man.

Next day at the Pavilion there was a grand entertainment to support a fund to establish a Manx Musical Scholarship.

The artists included Master Haydn Wood, violinist, and the Douglas Town Band and Harry Wood's Students orchestra and a Manx National Choir of 50 voices also in charge of Harry Wood. These choristers appeared in Manx native costume as befitted such an occasion.

The Douglas Hot Pot Committee made a distribution of 400 hot-pots to the poor people of Douglas on Christmas Day.

The Ramsey dog and poultry show had an entry of 882 and £120 was offered in prizes.

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Peel dog and poultry show held in the Centenary Hall, Peel, also provided £100 in prizes and the Douglas Society whose big event was at the Palace on New Year's Day were more generous still and their prize list for the show totalled £200.

One of the big events in the parish of Malew about this time was the opening of the new Sunday School which was being attached to the new Primitive Methodist Chapel at Clycur.

The Sunday School building was 33 ft. by 20 ft. and there was seating for 150 people.

The social event to mark this new Sunday School was held in Ballamodha Board School.

**4,000 AT BAND OF HOPE RALLY**

But out-shining all these events for numbers was the Band of Hope Jubilee held at the Palace in Douglas.

It was estimated that there was an attendance of 4,000 people including 2,500 children. A huge stage was erected with 25 tiers each 70 feet in length.

Owing to building alterations a gigantic Hospital Ball at the Castle Mona Hotel was called off.

The Douglas Amateur Minstrels were a popular attraction at this time and they gave a concert to a packed audience at Ballaugh.

Castletown boasted a choral society and they gave a Christmas concert in the Town Hall.

A Brass Band concert at Belle Vue, Douglas, was won by a band from Foxdale and the Volunteers Band was first in another class. Best cornet player was Mr W. Johnson, of Foxdale.

A two days bazaar in the Ramsey Pavilion in aid of St. Olave's Church produced £260.

The 'Manx Sun' announced that their Almanac for 1868, would be particularly attractive and would include a "splendid portrait" of the new Attorney-General, Mr George Alfred Ring.

**At a bazaar held at Ballaugh in aid of the new Chapel at the Cronk, one of the Peel visitors, Mr W. Moore, returned home with a sheep, a goose, and an antimacassar. There had been a draw with 900 articles and this was his share of "the spoils."**

At the Isle of Man Chrysanthemum Society's show at Castletown, Mr C. Clague, coachman to Dr. Clague, of Castletown, won the premier award.

Looking round the shops it was reported that many tradesmen had gone to great trouble to present an attractive array of goods for Christmas.

In sales at Ramsey Mart best prices for two heifers were paid by Laxey Co-operative Society-- £11.5.0 and £12.5.0 and a fat beast was bought for £12.15.0 by W. D. Clark, this being the best

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price of the day. J. J. Christian, Braust, bought 5 ewes for £1.16.6.

An examination of prices in the shops at this period makes interesting reading.

Special blends of tea were available from 1s. 4d. a lb., finest Canadian cheese sold at 6d. per lb.

A Douglas shop advertised potatoes - "Ramsey grown" at 4s. per stone (bag given free) and Spanish onions at 1s. per stone.

Alfred Wall and Co. of the Ramsey Brewery offered East India Pale Ale at 1s. 4d. per dozen.

Good household flour was advertised by a grocer at 15s. per 140 lbs. bag.

Best lump sugar could be bought for 2d. per lb.; prime selected Valencias 2½ d. per lb.

In clothing "Heavy Manx Drawers" were available at 3s. 11d. and 4s. 6d. per pair. Stockings were 3½d. per pair; cardigan jackets 2s. 6d. each and boys' shirts, 6d. each.

In Ramsey Curphey's "Manx Chipped Potato and Fried Fish Establishment" in Church St., opposite St. Paul's Church, announced that they were "now in a position to meet all demands with a new Cooking Stove, constructed on the most improved principle by Mabbott and Co., Manchester. No waiting! Two stoves in full swing every week-day!! Hot-pot, Rice Pudding, Green Peas, Soups, Home-made Ginger Beer, etc."

The Isle of Man and Manx Northern Railways ran 24 trains a day and return fare between Douglas and Ramsey was 4s., 1<sup>st</sup> class and 3s. third class.

The Steam Packet Co. sailings were between Liverpool and Douglas daily, Liverpool and Ramsey direct on Fridays and Saturdays, Belfast and Douglas occasionally, Glasgow and Douglas on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and between Ramsey and Whitehaven on Mondays.

### GREAT GALE

A month before Christmas there was a severe gale which hit the west of the Island especially.

In Peel it was reckoned it would cost £1,200 to repair 120 yards of sea wall which had been damaged.

Ramsey lifeboat was called out to rescue five men from the Belfast steamer 'Nelson' which ran aground on the South beach near the Albert Hotel.

There were two Company meetings of interest.

At the seventh annual meeting of Castletown Brewery Ltd. a dividend of 5 per cent. was declared and there was some talk of extending the premises.



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The accounts at the seventh annual meeting of the Palace Co. showed that the total revenue since the Company began had been £79,224 and this represented an average of £11,300 a year which was regarded as very satisfactory.

Douglas Steam Ferries Ltd. paid a dividend of 6 per cent. The Peveril Hotel Co. paid 15 per cent.

### **STOCKBROKER SENTENCED**

In the Courts there was tremendous interest in the case of Edmund Llewelyn Hartley, a local stockbroker, who was charged with defrauding Benjamin Lees, gentleman, of £512.10.0 by false pretences.

He was defended by J. J. Creer and appeared finally before a Court of General Gaol Delivery. The Bench consisted of the Governor, Lord Henniker, Deemster Gill, about to retire, and the Clerk of the Rolls (Alured Dumbell).

A newspaper account said that Hartley "rose from his seat in the dock blanched pale as death" when Deemster Gill passed sentence.

**The defendant was given a term of three years penal servitude.**

It was the last appearance in the Courts of Sir James Gell as Attorney-General for soon afterwards he was appointed Deemster to succeed Sir W. L. Drinkwater.

A pre-Christmas meeting of some importance was a sitting of the Assessment Board on December 20<sup>th</sup>, "to consider the revaluation of the town of Douglas."

### **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

The Douglas Schools Committee had a long debate on cruelty and the subject of corporal punishment. Mr L. S. Kneale had brought forward the allegation of cruelty in some cases.

**Eventually the Committee carried a resolution that the power of inflicting corporal punishment should be limited to the head teacher and two other teachers selected in each school by the school managers.**

### **A BREACH OF PROMISE ACTION**

There was news of a breach of promise action heard before the Under Sheriff and a jury in Leeds Town Hall in which the plaintiff, Miss Elizabeth Kelly, of Ramsey, was awarded £200 damages against the former suitor.

The Commission set up by the late Sir West Ridgeway to consider the possibility of introducing new industries to the Isle of Man had a long sitting and one big question under debate was the reason why the fishing industry was "decaying."

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**THE M.E.R. ROUTE**

A public meeting was held in the Infants School, Laxey Glen, to consider the proposed deviation of the Ramsey Tramway from the route authorised by Tynwald.

From the plan produced it was shown that there was to be an alternative route and instead of running underneath the Reading Room the railway would be carried across the Glen by a lofty viaduct through the Church grounds and "The Lawn" and then to the high road passing by the Parsonage to join the present Snaefell Line.

Mr James Moore said: "I am against visitors being carried through a rat hole instead of being allowed to view the beauties of the place."

The only voice in opposition to this view was heard from the Vicar (Rev. W. E. Davies) who feared that the new route would cause annoyance to Churchgoers.

His amendment that the other route should be adopted was not seconded.

Complaints were made that the return fare of 2s. between Douglas and Laxey was too high.

A meeting of Manx newsagents was held at the Coffee Palace in Douglas to form a branch of the Retail Union.

Mr W. K. Palmer presided and Mr S. K. Broadbent was secretary.

It was reported that some mischievous persons were going about the North of the Island docking tails of horses and it was pointed out in the "Courier" that in Barnsley a man had been sentenced to nine months imprisonment for this offence.

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by Syd Boulton

*The Gay Summer of 1888*

p. 8, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1968.

## **The Gay Summer Of 1888**

### **Numerous Attractions For Holidaymakers**

### **A Circus In Douglas And Another At Pulrose**

A SHORT TIME AGO in this series much interest was aroused by the story of Buxton's pierrots who first made their appearance in the summer of 1889.

This was probably the first professional pierrot troupe of this type to appear in Douglas. In the previous year there was a wide variety of entertainment for the holidaymakers and the newspaper files of eighty years ago show how there was a growing realisation of the need to stage the best possible "bill for the numbers of visitors flocking to the Isle of Man.

At the Falcon Cliff Pavilion and Pleasure grounds reached by a new tram lift from Douglas Promenade the popular musician Oliver Gags and his orchestra played newly composed tunes such as the waltz "Sweet Mona," a vocal Schottische "The Manx Herrin," and the vocal polka "Falcon Cliff."

High class vocal music was given by Olga Ballaglia, the celebrated contralto and Kendal Thompson, the renowned tenor.

**The magnificent ballroom catered for 5,000 people and it was announced that the proprietors saw to it that the floor was waxed daily.**

And the new electric lighting of 50,000 candle power was also a marvel of the age as was "the largest switchback railway in the Island."

The great rival resort was the Derby Castle and here in the Grand Pavilion De Jong's Orchestra provided the music.

Stars from the Carl Rosa Opera Company were engaged to sing together with a Japanese troupe with their own Japanese village.

At Bath Place Mr Elphinstone presented the new Promenade Circus.

Here was an arena which held 2,000 people—82 ft. in diameter with a 42 ft. diameter ring.

Deemster Gill and Mr S. Webb, Chairman of Douglas Town Commissioners, attended the opening performance and enjoyed a whirlwind programme of clowns, "educated dogs," daring horse

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displays, a comic boxing match, and a sword swallowing display.

The highlight was the act by Tom Yelding, "the champion rider of the world," who thrilled everyone with his feats of horsemanship. Gymnasts and Nellie Reid, the "greatest horsewoman in the world" were also in the programme.

For those with other tastes the Egyptian Hall on the Loch Promenade known as the Assembly Room was crammed nightly to witness the amazing Professor Weber, a conjuror par excellence and a ventriloquist.

**There was a sensational cabaret item in which Mme. Fay was sawn in half in a cabinet.**

The Marquis of Anglesey and his party were so impressed that they visited the hall twice.

**ANOTHER CIRCUS**

Another "monster circus" was staged in connection with a Manx Fair at Pulrose.

**Here the attractions included boating on the Lake, "the largest switchback in the world" and music by the South London Competition Prize Band and an exhibition by Captain Lyons, "the champion shot of the world."**

No expense had been spared with the circus and the turns included "The Wondrous Mermaid," the world famous Angelo Acrobats, Templai, renowned Christy Minstrels and Professor Ubini's Performing Fleas.

Lovers of Shakespeare crowded into a recital of "Henry V" by Thornton Beaumont, the well-known elocutionist, which was given in the Y.M.C.A. rooms in Wellington Street.

The Star Hotel in Douglas advertised a Concert Room where "well known artists appear each night, giving popular and select songs of the day."

There were also McLeod's Waxworks pulling in the crowds, a Derby Castle regatta, the Blue Hungarian Band under Herr Barvza on the Marina Green, and the Victoria Tower Camera Obscura at the top of Burnt Mill Hill.

At the Gaiety Theatre the society drama "Mr Barnes of New York" was a magnet for crowds in Douglas that summer.

The Buck's Road Skating Rink (sold to James Taggart that year for £4,460), an Art Pavilion which featured "Sappha," a sensational new painting, and Webb's Public Lounge and Emporium were also favourite places with the carefree folk who visited our shores 80 years back.

For those who wanted a visit to Ireland a trip on the "Caledonian" to Dublin cost 4s.

The "Manx Fairy" took excursionists to Laxey, the Dhoon and Ramsey and also to Port Soderick and

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Port St. Mary.

On Douglas Head the Harold Tower Refreshment Rooms did a good business.

Crowds flocked to the new Central Hotel at the foot of Broadway. It was claimed the hotel had been furnished "regardless of cost."

Not of course in the category of entertainment there was a tremendous crowd at a service on Douglas Head.

The Bishop walked from town with the Vicar-General and some clergy to the Head and the Bishop preached eloquently on the needs of the House of Industry—nearing the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its existence—and the collection brought in 3,564 coins, one half sovereign and one Manx £1 note.

### **OUT TOWN ATTRACTIONS**

Out of town Glen Helen grounds with "an excellent band", croquet lawn and other games was popular, the Dhoon Waterfall was a spectacle which was also to the fore.

St. Michael's Island, or Fort Island, was a pleasure resort with a landing pier, boating and ales, wines and spirits laid on and there was a charge of 3d. for admission to the grounds.

The Cliff Hotel, Port St. Mary, also advertised its charms.

A swimming gala in the new bath at King William's College and music by the Welsh Volunteers encamped at Pulrose were other items in the season programme.

### **PROMENADE CONCERTS AT INJEBRECK**

Laxey Glen Gardens (proprietor M. Forrester) was a great rendezvous for picnickers and of course the popularity of Injebreck as a resort was well established, with Daniel Mylrea as manager.

In the large pavilion there were "Promenade Concerts" given by the Holden family orchestra of seven players.

**Young Willie Holden, aged 9 years, was the solo violinist.**

At Ramsey there were occasional entertainments in the Pavilion and we read about a Ballad Concert at which Fanny Bouffleur, the celebrated soprano, Frank Reid, tenor, and Aimee Roland (Liverpool and Manchester concerts) were the principal vocalists.

There were regattas at Ramsey, Castletown and Port St. Mary.

The regatta at Castletown was a big affair and the programme included a practice by the Royal Volunteer Rocket Brigade.

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Rushen Abbey (5 minutes from Ballasalla Railway Station) was drawing a regular clientele of patrons.

The Falcon's Nest Hotel at Port Erin had installed a "magnificent new billiards table." It was said that the large dining room could accommodate 400 persons.

**"PLACE YOUR ORDERS"-- AT THE PRISON !**

Castle Rushen was still being used in those days as a prison but for 4d. and 2d. visitors could view the Castle and presumably the products of the prisoners' work was offered for sale because an advertisement stated: "Mats, matting and scrubbers made to order (the trade supplied). Orders for Oakum and sack tiles will receive immediate attention. Hair teasing done. Terms cash.

**BATHING TENTS AT PEEL**

The enterprising proprietor of the Fenella Hotel at Peel provided bathing tents "in the charming little bay between Peel Castle and Hill."

A newspaper comment said: "These are greatly appreciated by the visitors many of whom are daily to be seen enjoying a dip in the briny in that secluded spot and are thus able to dress and undress in privacy and without shocking modesty by undressing in the open air."

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by Syd Boulton

*The Story of the Rushworth Family*

p. 8, Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1968

## **The Story of the Rushworth Family**

### **They Lived For Music**

#### **Memories Of Former Years**

WHEN on St. Swinthin's Day, just over five weeks ago, Mrs Doris Kenna passed from this earthly scene, it meant the loss of one who was a real musician and artist and it also marked the severance of a link with glorious days when the Rushworth family to which she belonged were prominent in the world of music both here and in the Midlands.

At the request of a number of people who wish it to be set on record what Mrs Kenna and her parents achieved in the realm of music this tribute has been written and inadequate though it may be (for diligent research has not unfolded the whole story) it will give readers an insight into the remarkable history of this family of three.

For the Rushworth family music was their very existence—the nights and the days were filled with music.

One who knew the family intimately in former days told me: "Meals and the ordinary things of life simply didn't matter—music came first and foremost, their lives revolved round it. I can picture Mrs Rushworth, absolutely elegant, and most charming, accompanying some of the top vocalists of the day at the piano. She accompanied divinely."

Harry Rushworth, born in 1871, was also a musician in the top drawer. He had a brilliant career and became musical director and manager of the Theatre Royal in Birmingham and later the Prince of Wales Theatre in the same city.

He married Amy Mew in the early 1890s and it was a union between two lovers of music. Miss Mew came from a musical family and was one of three sisters who were all gifted. All three contributed to the development of music in the Island. One sister—Mrs T. Clague—taught the pianoforte for many years and the other sister was a music teacher and in later years turned to journalism.

Mr and Mrs Rushworth had one daughter—Doris--and from her early years she was brought up in the atmosphere of music worship and a love of the arts that was inherent.

By 1914 Mr and Mrs Rushworth and their daughter were figuring in important concerts on the mainland.

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By this time Doris was becoming a seasoned performer.

**Ten years before, at the age of 9 she had been given a special mention for her part in "East Lynne" at the Gaiety Theatre in Douglas.**

Said the critic: "A word of praise is due, in particular to Miss Doris Rushworth, who undertakes the role of Willie Carlyle. She is self possessed, earnest, sweet voiced, and tender and should win her way."

The 'Evening Gazette' of 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1914, reported that Mdme. Amy Rushworth and Miss Doris Rushworth had taken part in a Promenade concert at the Theatre Royal and the encore piece was said to be a triumph especially for Mdme. Amy "whose artistic accompaniments have greatly aided vocalists throughout the series."

The programme was arranged by Mr Rushworth.

Harry seems to have maintained a close connection with the Isle of Man although his musician's career took him to various parts of the country and there was a photograph which appeared in the "Isle of Man Times" showing him as captain of the Douglas Rugby Club team in 1892.

Appearances at the Palace concerts in Douglas—at the Music Guild—and all kinds of musical events were part of the regular routine of life for the Rushworth's. And when Mr Rushworth had passed on his wife still continued with her work.

She was a friend of the late Miss M. L. Wood who did so much for music in the Island.

When Mrs Rushworth died in 1948 at the age of 78, a writer referred to her "unbounded artistry and unbounded patience with pupils."

Her death was described as "a cultural loss to the Island."

In 1883 at the age of 12 Amy Mew was accompanist to the Douglas Glee Club at the old Gaiety Theatre on Prospect Hill. She played for "The Messiah" entirely from memory and at the close of the performances was presented with a set of music containing Beethovens's Sonatas.

During the First World War Mrs Rushworth was a nurse at the Queen Charlotte Maternity Hospital in London.

**After the war her husband, Harry, was one of the original Co-Optimists in the Adelphi Theatre in London - this was in 1920.**

For a period of ten years Mrs Rushworth was accompanist to the Ruby Ginner School of Dancing at Earl's Court.

Her husband died in 1928 and she decided to return to the Isle of Man and soon the St. Aubyn School of Dancing was established. For Mrs Rushworth had learned much about dancing during



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her years in London.

#### **AUTOGRAPHS OF THE FAMOUS**

As can be imagined constant contact with the theatre during a long period of years meant that the Rushworth's met some of the most famous stage personalities of the day.

Testimony to this is found in the family autograph book dating back to the early part of the century.

The names include figures like Bransby Williams, the character actor, Vesta Tilley, the famous music hall artiste—at her best in male impersonations, Wilkie Bard, another top music hall star; George Mozart, Irene Vanbrugh, Ernie Lotinga, Hetty King, Charles H. Fogg (Blackpool Festival, 1912), Gus and Fred McNaughton.

Jack Buchanan, Fred Emney, Fred Terry, Lilian Braithwaite, Seymour Hicks, Ellalaine Terriss, and other celebrated people also signed their autographs.

In a later period we find Joe Loss, the band leader, presenting an autographed photograph and Gladys Morgan and the performers in the "Variety Highlights" company at Ramsey in the record.

Of interest where a page is marked with a signature of Alby, the famous clown in the Three Austins—in 1945 Britain's top notch company trio appearing with Bertram Mills' Circus.

**It is stated that "Alby is married to Mona Connor, of the Connor's Circus family. As a little girl Mona rode bare-back in Connor's Circus in Douglas."**

The collection contains too a signed photo of Florrie Ford, the great chorus singer.

#### **EXAM SUCCESSES**

The long line of music successes dates back to the time when Doris Rushworth was a little girl of only 8 years of age.

A Certificate of the Incorporated Society of Musicians shows that she satisfactorily passed Grade 2 of the Local practical Examinations and obtained Honours. This was at Bridgnorth on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1905.

The collection of diplomas begins to pile up and in March, 1911, Doris' mother took first prize at the 20<sup>th</sup> Manx Music Festival with the "Acacia Girls Choir."

**At that time the family ran a musical academy. It was known as Acacia College in Bradda Mount, Douglas.**

Mrs Rushworth also took second prize with her All Saints Sunday School Choir and a first prize with a ladies' choir and a third with a 'Teddy Bear' Choir.

Mrs Rushworth's brilliant daughter, Doris, at 15 years of age, won first prize in a pianoforte duet

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with Miss Sarah Kelly, and a second award for her Nursery Rhymes Babies Choir.

Next we learn that Doris picked up a second prize at the Blackpool Music Festival in the pianoforte duet class.

A year later at the Music Guild, Mrs Rushworth's choirs gained two firsts and a second with her choirs and daughter Doris was second with Miss Sarah Kelly in the pianoforte duet, open.

**The certificates of that year were headed by a personal message from Lord and Lady Raglan to the committee and the secretary.**

This read: "Cheerful Days of Music's Sweetness Introduce its Natal Joys, God bless our Festival. All happiness attend you. Good luck be your reward. Ever your sincere friends."

Over in Birmingham later in the year Doris gained another Pianoforte diploma from the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music.

Came 1914 and Doris passed a Birmingham and Midland Institute Examination in the Rudiments and Theory of Music and also gained a certificate for ear training—both were higher grade awards.

Next came the distinction of winning a silver medal in elocution in the Christmas Examinations of the London Academy of Music.

The Great War had begun and for some years there was a break in the participation in competitions.

But in the years after the war Mrs Rushworth and her daughter were soon engaged in another whirl of activity in music and dancing.

The St. Aubyn School of Music and Dancing was founded and the dancing side prospered and there must be many to-day who can look back now on the happy times when they were being taught by the Rushworth's.

At the Manx Music Festival again in the late 1920s we find prizes going to the St. Aubyn School with almost monotonous regularity.

There was nothing monotonous though in the training which was given to [t]he young people.

It was lively, inspired, and thorough. This was no school in which mistakes were glossed over—perfection was always the end in view.

Nursery rhyme songs, rhythm and percussion, action songs, classical group dancing, junior choirs and other branches were all undertaken.

Judges of great note—Sir Granville Bantock, Norman Allin, Sidney Harrison, Dr. C. H. Moody, Albert Garcia, Steuart Wilson, Parry Jones and other outstanding figures were in the list of Guild judges of

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those days and the standards were high.

By this time Doris Rushworth had become Mrs Doris Kenna.

In October, 1930, at one of the fashionable weddings of the year she was married to Mr Bert Kenna, secretary to the Nunnery estate, secretary of the British Legion, and the W.M.A.

It was a ceremony in the beautiful Nunnery Chapel, with Nuptial Mass and all the trimmings [*sic*], and it was an occasion to remember. Mr Ramsey Johnson, Secretary to the House of Keys, was the best man.

But Mr Kenna's health diminished and he died within a few years. He passed away on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

On moving to Ramsey Mrs Rushworth and her daughter took a house on the South Promenade which was named St. Aubyn. Later Mrs Rushworth lived in May Hill.

The school got busy and in the war years the Rushworth's figured in scores of entertainments for the Service personnel stationed here.

Mrs Kenna married again—this time to a member of the R.A.F. whom she had met here and she became Mrs Doughty.

Under her new name she competed at the Music Festival with Percussion Bands and the like and brought home more prizes.

Meanwhile her mother, who was always held in great affection wherever she went, had become conductress of the Lhergy Songsters Choral Society in Ramsey.

**It was a proud moment when in 1947 she brought off the first prize in the 40 voices class.**

She also took the Lhergy Minstrels to the Wallasey Festival.

In October, 1948, Mrs Rushworth was taken ill and died—her memory is still treasured by many vocalists who studied music and song under her able guidance.

But the story of teaching music and dancing went on and the pupils of St. Aubyn School, always colourfully costumed for their stage appearances went on to win fresh honours.

In the 1950s cabaret and group awards were carried off to add to this unique collection.

The record would be incomplete without a mention of Mrs Kennas services as accompanist for the Harmony Four Orchestra with which Mr Teddy Collins was associated for so long.

Mr Collins, himself a musician of no mean ability, tells me that Mrs Kenna was in a class by herself as an accompanist and her musicianship was a tremendous asset. She played for classical concerts

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at the Hydro or in the rough and tumble of the jazz era with consummate ease and her ability was outstanding. She travelled with the band all over the Island.

Now after a life devoted to music and the arts she has passed on. The memory of the Rushworth family will long be remembered.

(S.B.)

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by Syd Boulton

*Spence Lees, Music Hall Owner*

p. 8, Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1968

## **SPENCE LEES, Music Hall Owner, Character Actor, Comic and Photographer**

Memories Of The Bijou  
Theatre In Douglas

Just recently in this series we featured the holiday scene in Douglas three quarters of a century ago and there was reference to the Bijou Theatre opened in Regent Street, (opposite the Post Office) in Douglas.

The founder of this enterprise was Noah Spence Lees. Following the publication of our article Mrs. Minnie Edith Quae, of Liverpool, daughter of the late Mr Lees, has sent along his scrap books from which the story of the life of an outstanding personality in the Island entertainment scene is written for the benefit of our readers.

It was in the summer of 1892 that Spence Lees, owner and manager of the Bijou Theatre in Douglas staged a series of first rate shows for holidaymakers and residents in Douglas.

Then aged 30 he was brimful of talent and well known in the music halls as a comedian and female impersonator.

Spence Lees was well qualified by family background and training to venture on his own into the entertainment business.

**He was a son of Noah Lees, part owner of the Star Music Hall in Liverpool. The 'Star' incidentally is now the Playhouse in Liverpool.**

Another member of the family had a music dealer's shop in Athol Street in Douglas.

**In 1890 Spence Lees had his own variety company appearing at Elphinstone's Circus on Douglas Promenade and on Sundays he arranged sacred concerts with famous prima donnas and other performers in the programme.**

He promoted a "Royal Surprise Party" show in the New Masonic Hall in Douglas and he himself was top of the bill. He was described as "The gifted vocalist and versatile comedian."

He was quite an experienced trouper then for he had appeared at The Trocadero Music Hall in Shaftesbury Avenue, London, at Kiernan's Variety Palace in Liverpool (at £6 a week), at the Paddington Palace, the Royal Muncaster Theatre, Bootle, at Kuster and Bial's and he was contemporary with many variety stars of former days including Dan Leno and Marie Lloyd and appeared with them.

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Lees also entertained at Belle Vue in 1891 when he was reckoned to have "made great strides in his profession,"

### STUDIO AND BICYCLE SHOP

He had opened photographic studio and bicycle shop etc., in Regent Street, in Douglas and he converted these premises into the Bijou Theatre with seating accommodation for 550 people.

All the latest improvements were incorporated with the best lighting, a water supply, etc., and the Auditorium included reserved seats, pit stalls and galleries. The theatre was approached from Regent Street by a broad staircase.

A newspaper report of the time stated: "The roof is formed of solid concrete and above is a spacious photographic studio with altering, enlarging and printing rooms with all the latest improvements in furniture and fittings."



Many a young man would have been deterred by the setbacks he had in constructing the Theatre.

**On one occasion a piece of timber fell on to his head causing a nasty wound. But he soon recovered and pressed on with the project in which he had invested a lot of hard cash.**

The opening of the Theatre was an auspicious occasion.

Mr Fred Maccabe, an entertainer of world wide reputation, was the big attraction.

Subsequently, Mr Montague Roby's midget minstrel troupe appeared with considerable success.

The Walsham-Talma Opera Company did a short season and under the management of Mr Gus Connelly "the pretty little Theatre in Regent Street" as it was referred to in the Press seemed destined for a great future.

Occasionally Spence Lees himself was called away to fulfil engagements at the Paddington Palace or some other famous centre of vaudeville.

But it was a period of keen competition in the entertainment world in Douglas and if one studies the Press notices the comment "fair attendance" sometimes creeps in. Nevertheless "the young and enterprising proprietor" as he was called, was encouraged by writers to persevere for it was

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felt that better days would follow.

In 1893 he secured Mr Charles Court and the Royal Court Comedy Combination for eight nights; other big names included the Great Grant, Q.C., ventriloquist, and Mdlle. Lottie, the "burlesque actress."

Lees appeared at his own Theatre in the role of "character vocal actor," and this was "by kind permission of the management of Falcon Cliff" - a rival resort, for he had been engaged there and was probably glad of the extra money in these tough times.

### **HARRY WOOD**

Another notable programme shows that Harry Wood played solo violin selections at the Bijou Theatre and again by permission this time of the Directors of Falcon Cliff, Spence Lees gave humorous and character sketches on the same evening.

In 1895 the Bijou Theatre was still going but Spence Lees, following a highly successful engagement at the Empire Theatre, Cardiff, returned to the Island and announced his intention to "constitute his Douglas property into a limited liability company."

**It was announced that the prospects of "The Bijou Theatre and Buildings Company" would be issued and that "the board of directors included several well known gentlemen in Liverpool."**

Eventually, however, he gave up the ownership of the Theatre and it seems to have passed to oblivion.

### **CO-STARRED WITH MARIE LLOYD**

Spence Lees threw himself into his stage work with renewed vigour and we read of him being co-starred with Marie Lloyd at the New Tivoli, Liverpool, in 1896, and "in conjunction with Mdlle. Marienne Tostia and Leo Trainor, Lees entertained for two hours a large and fashionable audience at the Sefton Hall, near Liverpool."

By 1897 he was billed as "The Great Spence Lees" and at the Empire Theatre in Hull was the star of the show.

One of his greatest successes was as the "Duchess" in "Un tour de Valse."

### **CIRCUS FIRE**

In a circus fire at Dundee Spence Lees had his music and valuable wardrobe destroyed but with typical resource he was in business again a few days later and was on schedule at a large Glasgow theatre fully costumed and equipped.

A handbill which has been preserved shows that "Mr Spence Lees, Photographic Artist, begs to

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inform his Friends and Visitors that he has severed his connection with Glen Helen owing to the unfavourable Atmosphere and Shades in the locality and respectfully invites them to an inspection of his New Studio opposite the General Post Office, Douglas.

The announcement also said that he was taking photos at Glen Maye and Port Soderick.

A Cycle Depot with "New and reliable machines" was a forerunner of the Bijou Theatre and was another Lees family concern.

**In 1902 a newspaper report stated that Mr Lees studio at Port Erin was carried out to sea in a gale!**

### **COURT CASE FOLLOWS HONEYMOON**

The scrap book is almost entirely devoted to newspaper cuttings about Mr Lees on stage but there are a few other items of interest.

One is headed "Amusing Case" and reads as follows:--

"In the Small Debts Court at Douglas yesterday (Saturday), William Lay, a member of the Manx Bar, sued Mrs. Anderton, Douglas, a lodging housekeeper for overcharge made by defendant. Plaintiff, returning from his honeymoon, took apartments in defendant's house, pending the completion of his own house at £2.18.0 per week but only stayed a week. He was charged for attendance and boot cleaning and declined to pay more than £2.18.0, but as defendant threatened to detain his luggage he paid under protest. Evidence as to custom having been given in support of plaintiff's case the defendant was sworn and caused much amusement by declaring that Mr and Mrs Lay being still on their honeymoon gave extraordinary trouble. They had so many callers who took afternoon tea that she was compelled to charge for attendance. She always [*sic*] charged a week and a day when people came on Friday and left on the same day of the following week. She had been to seven Manx advocates and asked them to appear for her but they all refused to take a case against a brother advocate. The Judge said the custom proved was conclusive and there would be execution."

There is a report too of a Comic Football Match between a theatrical team v. Stanley and Wanderers and of a fire at the Bijou Theatre or the 'Mona' theatre as it was sometimes called.

It seems that Baptists worshipped there on Sundays and they used the name Regent Hall.

The story of Spence Lees is a remarkable one indeed and he was certainly one of the great stage personalities of the 1890s and a pioneer too in commercial photography.

It seems sad to relate that at the age of 52 Spence Lees passed away on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1914. At that time he lived in Ballawil, Agneash, and had photographic studios in Laxey.



'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1968*

by Syd Boulton

*Derby Castle – the First Music-Hall in Douglas*

p. 8, Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1968

## **DERBY CASTLE – THE FIRST MUSIC-HALL IN DOUGLAS**

### **Where Florrie Forde Made Her Name**

Although Douglas has possessed theatres of greater age such as the Theatre Royal in Wellington Street, the Derby Castle which has disappeared now to make room for a brand new amusement resort was the first place of entertainment to provide a mixed programme of music, dancing and variety in the Victorian music hall tradition.

Before the site was developed as an entertainment resort there was a private residence there, built about 1830. This stone structure later became a licensed hotel which quite a number of people will remember.

The original pavilion was erected in the 1870s.

The fact that the hotel was at the resort proved to be an advantage for here was a licence to sell liquor, an amenity which no other resort in Douglas then possessed.

**It was something which did much to develop the character and atmosphere of the true Victorian music hall.**

And it created for the resort an individuality which made it popular in spite of its rather distant position from the centre of the town.

Even for a few years after the Second World War Derby Castle maintained its antique atmosphere and many famous bands and almost every variety artist of national repute appeared in the ballroom or theatre.

As long ago as 1909 the management with characteristic enterprise traded in on the popular craze of roller skating which had a revival of success at that time and it was decided to keep open during the winter.

Florrie Forde's association with the Derby Castle goes back to 1900 and she appeared every season after that, except for the war years, until the 'thirties—what a marvellous record! Florrie had her own cottage at Niarbyl during the summer months and she really loved the Island.

There will still be many who remember Florrie's nightly appearances on the ballroom stage, in complete command of the large and noisy audience, vlling [*sic* filling?] the hall with her robust

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singing without any electronic aid.

She was the star of the Derby Castle in its heyday - make no mistake about that.

Florrie Forde (1876-1940) came to this country from Melbourne where she appeared in pantomime and was known as the Australian Marie Lloyd, her real name being Florence Flanagan. She first appeared in London on Bank Holiday, 1897, and was very effective in putting over a chorus.

**On one occasion the audience made her repeat an old favourite 33 times!**

A massive woman she was in her time a famous Principal Boy and a great and lovable star. Her voice and delivery matched her ample figure and perhaps her best known songs were "Down at the Old Bull and Bush," "Has anybody here seen Kelly," "Hold your hand out, you naughty boy" and "Oh, Oh, Antonio."

In the year 1900 when Florrie Forde first appeared at Derby Castle, it was said that the variety theatre accommodated 2,000 people.

In the Ballroom specially laid in Australian oak, Jarrow wood and Walnut, Harry Wood's orchestra provided the music.

A covered way had been built through the gardens from the Tramway Terminus to the Pavilion and Opera House.

**GREAT STARS**

Great names in the music hall are remembered in connection with Derby Castle.

George H. Elliott, the [REDACTED] successor of Eugene Stratton was another great favourite.

Before his time that was a big occasion when Marie Lloyd (1870-1922) the idol of the music hall for many years appeared on the same bill as Harry Randall who had appeared in Dan Leno's last Drury Lane pantomime and with Paul Cinquevalli, probably the greatest juggler the music halls have ever known.

He juggled with anything from cannon balls to billiard balls, with equal skill and was top of the bill for over 20 years.

Hetty King, Randolph Sutton, Wilkie Bard, Harry Lauder, Albert Chevalier, Vesta Tilley and others come to mind in this great era on the stage and the Derby Castle played an important part in bringing to the Manx holiday scene top notchers and other not so well known stars who in the years following earned greater fame.

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**As long ago as 1877 the 'Castle' boasted that their programmes included the finest artistes from the Crystal Palace.**

Even after the Second World War some of the best variety acts in Britain were brought to the Derby Castle, trapeze artists, vocalists of renown, trick cyclists and acrobats and it was only when the public taste changed that the long tradition was ended.

During the Second World War the Derby Castle became a furniture repository where the contents of hotels and boarding houses, taken over as internment camps, were stored for the duration.

Now a swim pool and solarium and other amusements will be provided for the holidaymakers of a different age.

### **EARLY HISTORY**

**Delving back into its earlier history did you know that at one time an Iron Pier jutted out from Derby Castle and was a popular promenade for visitors?**

It was about 150 yards long and built on iron supports and judging from pictures it had a footway about 10 ft. in width.

The magnificent Ballroom was erected in the 1880s and it could seat about 3,000 people. It was a pioneer of dance halls in the Island. In a separate building was the theatre for the then new-style "variety" type of show.

A newspaper reference of 1897 states the resort was then owned by the Derby Castle Hotel and Pleasure Grounds Company and it was the venue for fetes on a large scale. In the hill above, at that time, was the Isle of Man Industrial Home for Destitute Children.

**In 1890 the Queen's Promenade was extended from the foot of the Burnt Mill Hill. Prior to that there was only a rough track.**

How did it get the name "Derby Castle."

Well, the "Castle" was of course a fake. It was a modern structure built in the form of a medieval fortress about 1837.

Major Samuel Pollock, J.P., C.P., who lived at Strathallan House, had built what was known as "Strathallan Lodge" originally.

It was not until 1876 that the place became an amusement resort.

The 1863 Thwaites Guide to the Island shows Derby Castle to be a private residence.

It was then owned by the Pollock family.

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Major Pollock's son, James, who became an officer in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Light Infantry was born at Derby Castle in 1834, according to a note in "Manx Worthies."

**PURCHASED BY A. N. LAUGHTON**

It was the well known advocate, Alfred Nelson Laughton (later High-Bailiff) who set Derby Castle going as a pleasure resort.

When he was 48 years of age he bought the property from Major Pollock and others for £4,700.

The obituary notice in respect of High-Bailiff Laughton who died in 1911 stated: "He was the first to introduce into Douglas the form of entertainment for holidaymakers that has developed greatly and has met with marvellous success."

He erected a pavilion there for dancing and music recitals.

**SUNDAY CONCERTS ROW**

Though he was a devoted Churchman, Laughton saw nothing wrong in staging Sunday evening concerts with programmes of sacred music.

But he incurred the wrath of clergy and Nonconformist ministers alike and a petition was circulated and signed by 61 ministers of religion protesting against this incursion into the Sabbath.

In deference to their wishes he eventually stopped the concerts which attracted large audiences.

In 1878 Laughton transferred the Derby Castle to a company and in later years the Palace and Derby Castle Co, took over.

'Peeps into the Past' article in *The Courier [Isle of Man] 1970*

by Syd Boulton

*Old Douglas Theatres*

p. 14, Friday November 27<sup>th</sup> 1970

## Old Douglas Theatres

AT A MEETING of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society in 1960, a paper on "Old Douglas Theatres" by Mr Neil Mathieson, F.S.A., was read by Mr Marshall Cubbon. It provides a valuable record of a way of life already part of our past:-

The earliest mention of a theatre in Douglas was in 1759, when the Commander of one of the King's Cutters complained to the Governor that his Pilot was attacked when coming from "The Playhouse."

Townley, therefore, was not correct when he stated that the first Theatre in Douglas was started by Captain William Barton Tennison in 1788.

The site of neither of these places of entertainment is known, although there was a building 50 feet long and 40 feet high at the junction of Queen's Street and the Quay known as "Bank's Dancing Room," or "Playhouse" and sometimes as "Downward's Long Room."

### DRUNKEN ACTORS

This was probably the building mentioned by both the Naval Commander and Townley as there were three later references to "a pretty little Theatre belonging to a clever widow named Tennison"; to a Theatre formed from an Assembly Room at the expense of Captain Tennison and to "Downward's Assembly Room," late "Theatre."

Actors, "drunken, miserable and incompetent," came from Whitehaven in the summer to perform there. Plays were presented there until 1824.

Between 1807 and 1819, there were advertisements in the local papers for performances at "The Theatre," "The Royal Theatre" (Assembly Room) and "The Theatre" Fort Street."



It is probable that these were the names of the same building, as an Assembly Room in Fort Street was partly used as a Theatre.

PHOTO: 'Douglas Promenade by John Miller Nicholson, R.A., captured the essence [sic] of the town in its hey-day as a place of entertainment. (block courtesy Manx Museum).'

Before Victoria Street was built there was a building behind Duke Street and between the site of Victoria Street and Wellington Street. There was a market on the ground floor with

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an Assembly Room above. It was called "The Waterloo Buildings" and plays were produced there.

**AMATEUR DRAMATICS**

In 1820, the name "Waterloo Theatre" was changed to "Royal Theatre"; but in 1821 the name "Theatre Royal" is found to apply to one on the pier. In February, 1823, amateur dramatic performances were given in Dixon's Assembly Room at the British Hotel. The late William Cubbon thought that the Pier building was on the site now covered by the cargo shed of the I.o.M. S.P. Co.

In September 1822, the amateurs fitted up as a theatre a large billiard room in a building at the corner of Athol St. and Prospect Hill, belonging to the Methodist Friendly Society. They called this "The New Theatre" and played there regularly until 1830 when the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Bridget's took it over.

In 1855 a John Massey, or Mosley, started a Theatre in the Wellington Market at the corner of Wellington Street and Duke Street, but, after occupying it for three years, he purchased the sail cloth factory of the Moore family further up the street and built there the "Theatre Royal."

The "Theatre Royal" opened with Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" in June, 1858. It had boxes, pit and gallery, with separate entrances and could seat 1,000. It was the leading Douglas Theatre until "The Grand" was built in Victoria Street in 1882, after which it declined until it had to close down in 1890.

**CINEMAS ARRIVE**

The "Grand" is now the "Regal" and became a cinema in 1935. The old "Victorian Theatre," still in use, is "The Gaiety," built in 1900. It took its name from one which existed in the Victoria Hall on Prospect Hill, built in 1862, and which changed its name to "The Gaiety" about 20 years later.

Audiences were often unruly and there are accounts of the hooking of a performer's wig with a fish-hook and line, exposing his bald head, and of pushing one of the audience onto the stage in the middle of the performance.

The plays had such lurid titles as "The Idiot Witness" "A Tale of Blood," and "The Foundling of the Forest." All titles which would very aptly fit the horror films which are provided for our "entertainment" today.